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MEN AND MANNER IN PARLIAMENT

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MEN AND MANNER

IN

PARLIAMENT

BY THE

MEMBER FOR THE CHILTERN HUNDREDS

REPRINTED, WITH ADDITIONS, FROM THE
'GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE'

'Tis strange to see the humours of these men,
These great aspiring spirits that should be wise.
DANIEL.—*Tragedy of 'Philotas.'*

LONDON
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND
1874

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MEN AND MANNER IN PARLIAMENT.

CHAPTER I.

FALLEN OUT OF THE RANKS.

The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.
Lament for Flodden.

The Parliament whose birth dates from the spring of 1874 is still in its earliest infancy, and has its history to make. Called together in an unexpected manner, it seemed for a space dazed into a state of quietude, and for some months of the past session affairs progressed with a tame regularity, and a forbearance of party spirit unknown since the last years of the premiership of Lord Palmerston. But, reversing the proverbial order of

the progress of the month of March, the session, coming in like a lamb, went out like a lion, and for brilliancy of debate and excitement of situation, the last weeks of the first session, dating from the introduction of the Regulation of Public Worship Bill, will bear comparison with any but the nationally critical epochs of precedent Parliaments.

This varied condition of affairs has been singularly favourable for studying men and manner in Parliament, having afforded opportunities for all classes of members to come to the front and parade. There have been times when in the midst of the arrayed hosts Mamilius has encountered Herminius and

> All round them paused the battle,

whilst one "laid on for Tusculum" and the other championed Rome. And there have been long seasons when Mamilius has been cutting down trees or grafting rose-buds in his garden at Tusculum, and Herminius has been sitting with folded arms and downcast head,

apparently asleep on the Treasury Bench which in these modern times represents "the bridge he kept so well," and when need were attacked so well, in the brave days of old. On these occasions less distinguished men have found and made the most of the opportunity for moving Parliament; and bystanders, having eyes to see and ears to hear, have been able to judge what store of talent of the state-saving order England had in reserve for use when those who are now responsible for the government of the country shall have finished their work. Further, the first session of the Parliament of 1874 was peculiarly favourable to the performance of the task here modestly undertaken, because the shifting of the political barometer had resulted in a complete revolution of position in the House of Commons. Men who had for years sat on the right-hand side of the Speaker were fain to establish themselves on his left; whilst the familiar forms on the left rose and crossed over to fill the favoured seats opposite. Ministers, accustomed to carry

the official manner, were compelled suddenly to practice the tone and follow the train of thought of men who were in opposition, whilst the party who had been growing grey in the attacking ranks, assumed the defensive and essayed to create where once it had been their function to criticise. Under these circumstances manner has been tried under new conditions, and men, waking up from the humdrum pace into which they had fallen in the latter months of the five-year old assembly, have gained a new lease of energy, inspired by fresh impulses and new opportunities.

It will be well, however, before we proceed to study the various phases of character presented by the new Parliament, to reckon up the principal losses sustained in the course of its election. These were, from various points of view, decidedly notable, few general elections since that which followed on the passing of the Reform Act of 1832 having effected so great a clearance of faces familiar to the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Of course, in an assembly renovated to the extent of nearly one-fourth its bulk, some of the more prominent of the rank and file must go. But a peculiarity of the new Parliament is that entrance to it was refused to some who had stood the test of many elections, and who sat in Parliament whilst the generation which rejected them was in its cradle. The case of Sir John Pakington is one in point. For nearly thirty years the venerable baronet had sat for Droitwich, beating off would-be rivals in a manner that was not triumphant only because it was effected with ridiculous ease. If before the dissolution one not intimately acquainted with local politics at Droitwich had been asked to name half-a-dozen members whose return was under any circumstances certain, Sir John Pakington would doubtless have been one of the first three. It would have been as easy ten years ago to have thought of Tiverton apart from Lord Palmerston as it was in January, 1874, to meditate upon Droitwich without Sir John Pakington

as its parliamentary representative. As for the right honourable baronet himself, it must have been with him and the Worcestershire borough as it was with Coleridge and his youth:—

> O Youth! for years so many and sweet,
> 'Tis known that thou and I were one;
> I'll think it but a fond conceit—
> It cannot be that thou art gone!

Droitwich did go, however; and at an epoch that made the severance the more cruel. Sir John Pakington had never been the Moses of the Conservative party in its long sojourn in the wilderness of Opposition; but he had at least been as one of the "able men" whom the Lawgiver called to his aid at the suggestion of Jethro, and it seemed hard, just when the Promised Land was in sight, and when his colleagues were marching in to take possession, that Droitwich should forsake him for a Mr. Corbett. He had long ceased to be of much account in a House of Commons many of the members of which were at school whilst he was adminis-

tering the affairs of the Colonies. But he was always regarded with a feeling of kindliness that did credit to the hearts of hon. members. It is true that they would not stay to listen to his critical meanderings through the statements of Mr. Cardwell; but short of that, which was perhaps too much to expect, Sir John Pakington was, during the closing years of his career in the House, treated with a consideration which English gentlemen are, happily, always ready to pay to mediocrity when it is well off, is highly connected, and can express its absence of ideas without violation of the rules of grammar or the principles of accent. It is a reflection that probably struck home to some hearts when the result of the election at Droitwich was flashed through the country, that on the very last occasion Sir John Pakington played a leading part in the House of Commons there were only seven members present—of whom the Secretary of State for War was not one—and, the right hon. baronet

declining to proceed with his criticisms of the Estimates in the absence of their author, Mr. Cardwell had to be fetched in from his dinner. Indeed Sir John Pakington's Parliamentary speeches had of late years distinctly assumed the shape of friendly conversation across the table with Mr. Cardwell, the audience being composed chiefly of the Speaker, the Sergeant-at-Arms, and the gentlemen in the Press Gallery; and it will hence be well understood that the disturbance effected on the occasion referred to in Mr. Cardwell's private arrangements was essential to the progress of the projected speech. If Mr. Cardwell was inconvenienced, no one would regret it more than Sir John Pakington, for he is above all things a gentleman. His Toryism was as unimpeachable as that of Colonel Stuart Knox, for example; but he had a way of dealing with his political opponents altogether different from that which it had occurred to Colonel Stuart Knox to adopt as being polite and effective. A certain simplicity of mind, combined with

an amusing weightiness of manner, would have made Sir John an interesting speaker if he had not been insupportably prolix. As a man of action he may have done credit to the Worcestershire Yeomanry Cavalry, of which he is the lieutenant-colonel; but he was, on the whole, a failure as Minister of War, and was not a success as First Lord of the Admiralty. Yet the mere fact that in a single year he held those offices in succession proves—if we avoid the conclusion that Mr. Disraeli was at the juncture fatally hard up for lieutenants —that Sir John Pakington is an administrator of more than average capacity; and it gives a deeper tinge to the glow of satisfaction with which we regard the still active septuagenarian seated in the House of Lords, thinly disguised under the title of Baron Hampton.

It is a safe assertion that the House of Commons regarded the loss of Sir John Pakington as heavier to bear than that which the Tower Hamlets inflicted upon it by the rustication of a Minister from the other side

of the House who is best known in connection with his direction of the Board of Works in Mr. Gladstone's ministry. The Right Hon. Acton Smee Ayrton at one time occupied the distinguished position of the most thoroughly disliked member of the House of Commons. In the last year of the old Parliament, Mr. Lowe deposed him from this eminence, and Mr. Ward Hunt unwittingly did much to advance him in public esteem by his reference to the rumour that the Commissioner of Works and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were "not on speaking terms." But at best Mr. Ayrton retired from the House amid a general chorus of congratulation. It is a pity, for he is of the stuff of which able Ministers are made. As a debater he stood high, and in fact it was to the exhibition of his skill in debate, so dangerous to the Prime Minister when exercised from below the gangway, that Mr. Ayrton owed his advancement. Like Mr. Lowe, Mr. Vernon Harcourt, Mr. Henry James, and many others, Mr. Ayrton

made himself so excessively disagreeable as an independent member that when Mr. Gladstone took office in 1868, he installed him in the Parliamentary Secretaryship to the Treasury, whence his advance to the Chief Commissionership of Works was rapid. The House of Commons was not slow to complain of the insolence which Mr. Ayrton speedily began to show in this last office; but it is only fair to point out that the House was itself chiefly responsible for the phenomenon. It is long enough ago to be forgotten that one of the chief delights of hon. members in that fresh, cheerful hour that follows the saying of prayers was to hear the Chief Commissioner of Works snub courageous querists. If there was a question on the paper for the answering of Mr. Ayrton, the right hon. gentleman's rising was anticipated just as at a circus the entrance of a favourite clown is looked for when the horse-riding is growing monotonous and the gymnasts tedious. When Mr. Ayrton rose to reply, it was well understood that he was

expected to say something pert, and to do him justice, he seldom fell short of the anticipation.

The capacity for uttering brief, sharp, stinging replies that answered nothing was his speciality, and he laid himself out to keep up his character. The House cheered him if he were up to the average, and if by a happy chance he went beyond it the House roared with approving laughter, and "Ayrton's last" was chuckled over in all the lobbies. In course of time the novelty of the thing wore off. It became the fashion to abuse Mr. Ayrton, and his struggles after a prolongation of popularity by the old arts only furnished texts for fresh protests against what had now come to be regarded as his "boorishness." This is too bad. But Mr. Ayrton is a man upon whom pity were wasted. In his ostracism he has doubtless been supported by a sublime consciousness of personal superiority over his detractors which is not altogether without foundation. He is a better man than nine-

tenths of the crowd that had been yelling at his heels for the two years preceding the dissolution of the Parliament of 1868, and if he has the wisdom to profit by the lesson of his early failure he will at no distant date prove his superiority. As a departmental officer he was far more successful than the glamour thrown around his administration by his framing of Park Acts and his dealings with Kew Gardens will allow a partially informed public to perceive. As a speaker he always brought to the debate strong common sense, a logical arrangement of ideas, and a power of felicitous expression, lightened up by flashes of wit and biting satire. His defence of his conduct when arraigned in 1873 by Mr. Vernon Harcourt was a masterpiece of straightforward cut and thrust oratory, of which it does not need to say more than that, rising amid a freezing silence, he sat down under a storm of cheers; and there prevailed a general impression that, whilst of the two speakers one certainly had been shown to

deserve universal reprobation, it was not Mr. Ayrton.

Two old and prominent members were lost to the House of Commons in Mr. Bernal Osborne and Mr. Bouverie. The former enjoyed a special reputation in the House which an hon. member once referred to by speaking of him as "the chartered libertine of debate." On the following morning this phrase appeared in the parliamentary report of a leading Liberal journal as the "shattered libertine of debate." This rendering was of course due to a typographical error, but it could scarcely have been happier had it been carefully designed by a successful coiner of epigrams. For many years Mr. Osborne occupied the honourable position of chief jester to the House of Commons. In the course of his tenure of the post he has said more impertinent things than any other man dare, or perhaps more than any other man would feel inclined to be responsible for. It was the fashion to laugh at all his thrusts, though reviewed in cold

blood it is often difficult to discover either wit or humour in them. An example, taken at random from a large store, will place the public outside the House in a position to judge of what passes for wit within its walls. During the debate on the Education Act Amendment Bill, Mr. Osborne found himself sitting on a back bench below the gangway, and rose thence to address the House. Making, in the course of his remarks, some characteristic reference to the Nonconformists, a member on his right hand side said reproachfully "Oh!" Turning round upon the interrupter, Mr. Osborne continued, "My hon friend says 'Oh!' I don't know what my hon. friend is, but he looks like a Nonconformist—" whereat the House went into a fit of laughter which lasted several moments. In fact, on the memorable occasion when Mr. Chichester Fortescue knocked over the ink, and whilst hastily wiping it up with a piece of blotting-paper upset a tumbler of water over Mr. Cardwell, who had come to his assistance, the House

of Commons did not laugh longer or louder than it did over this exquisite flash of wit.

There remain yet in both Houses of Parliament men who sat in the unreformed House of Commons, and who will not have forgotten Sir Charles Wetherell. They will doubtless recognize the broad points of resemblance between Mr. Bernal Osborne and the hon. member for Boroughbridge, who blustered through the last days of the old Parliament, and whose political life appropiately closed with its dissolution. Younger men can discern the resemblance for themselves by looking through the memorable debates of the session of 1831. "The present cabinet of Althorpe and Co.," said Sir Charles Wetherell, in a speech I open at random, "seem to have proceeded upon the precedent in the history of England which was given by Cromwell, Fairfax, Milburne, and Co. His plan of cutting off the boroughs and diminishing the number of members has not the merit of originality, for it is almost the same in form,

in substance, and in principle, as the radical system of reform which was introduced by the regicides when they established a Commonwealth in England." Are not this fine humour of calling the ministry of which Lord Althorpe was a member, "Althorpe and Co.," and "the downright, hearty way" of describing the procedure of the Reform Act, like an echo of a successful speech by Mr. Bernal Osborne? One point of difference between the original and the imitator was that, whilst Sir Charles Wetherell was a staunch and faithful Tory, the late member for Waterford did not trammel his humour by any considerations of party. He was admittedly the "funny man" of St. Stephen's; but regarding his humour critically, perhaps the most legitimately successful manifestation of it was to be found in the fact that his regular seat was on the Liberal Ministerial benches. Votes being too serious a thing to be funny about with a Liberal constituency scanning the division list, Mr. Osborne generally voted straight with his

party; but of late Sessions he rarely rose from his seat behind Mr. Gladstone without having some little halfpenny dart to shoot at the right hon. gentleman or at the policy of his Government.

Mr. Bouverie shared one peculiarity with the member for Waterford, inasmuch as he too sat upon the Ministerial benches whilst he did all that lay in his power to thwart the Ministerial policy. But Mr. Bouverie was as studiously gentlemanly and diffident in his manner as Mr. Osborne was vulgar and aggressive. It was almost distressing to watch the right hon. gentleman's perturbation of mind, and even his self-abasement, when he rose to put Ministers or the House right upon some point of procedure or precedent. Evidently, if he had had his choice, Mr. Bouverie would rather have cut off his feet than stand upon them to intrude his poor counsel upon so august a body as the British House of Commons, or to express any opinion that might cause inconvenience to gentlemen for

whom he had so strong a personal esteem and respect as for Her Majesty's Ministers. But duties, however unpleasant, must be performed, and to do Mr. Bouverie justice he never shirked his when they lay in this direction. Mr. Gladstone must be more than human if he saw without emotion that two of the earliest victims of the dissolution of Parliament were gentlemen who had done their best in the way of candid friendship to foster the causes that brought about its—for the Liberal party—disastrous issue.

There are at least a score of other men of the late House of Commons, perhaps of less distinction, but of equally strongly marked individuality, who find no place in the new. Whilst we are on the back Ministerial benches with Bernal Osborne and Mr. Bouverie, shall we forget that charmingly garrulous old gentleman who represented Devonport for full seven years? Some time in 1873, when the near approach of the dissolution had become apparent, a deputation of the local Liberal Com-

mittee waited upon Mr. Montague Chambers, and invited him to announce his intention of retiring, in order to make way for another and more suitable candidate. Mr. Chambers answered with a spirit which the Speaker and the half-dozen other official personages who were usually compelled to be present whilst the member for Devonport harangued them in the House of Commons would well understand. The immediate consequence of this interview was that Mr. Montague Chambers redoubled his attention to his parliamentary duties. Devonport had hinted that he was scarcely up to the mark! He would show Devonport that it was grievously in error; and so, night after night, sometimes twice a night, Mr. Chambers was on his legs addressing "Mr. Speaker." There was neither beginning nor middle to his harangues, and the end was long delayed. His oratorical manner was decidedly peripatetic. Aristotle himself never covered as much ground in the course of a lecture as did Mr. Montague Chambers in the process of deliver-

ing a speech. He invariably enjoyed the advantage of having the whole length of the bench to himself; and, starting from the end near the gangway, gradually worked himself along till he stood under the shadow of the Press Gallery, and then edged downwards towards his starting-point, making two, three, or more of these passages, according to the length of his address. "Now why do I say this?" was his favourite phrase, uttered with his forefinger provokingly pointed, and his head on one side, his face wearing the air of infinite wisdom we sometimes see in the parrot. Heaven only knew why! The House of Commons never could make out; but it nevertheless misses the chirping Q.C., who, regarding his dress, manner, and speech, I have always thought was an embodiment of Mr. Micawber that would have better accorded with the ideas of Mr. Dickens than the clever but more pronounced presentment which has been given us on the stage.

Just underneath Mr. Chambers Mr. Alder-

man Lawrence sat and took up his parable about the house tax. Right hon. gentlemen on the leading Liberal bench have been better able to get their after-dinnner nap now the alderman has gone, for he had not a voice soft and low, which would have been a beautiful thing in an alderman who had so much to say. Perhaps he had it at heart to strike an average with Mr. Edgar Bowring, who sat in the corner seat of the same bench and rarely said anything except "Hear, hear." But, *per contra*, the junior member for Exeter bodily occupied his seat for more hours of the Session than any other member—not excluding the Speaker, who does sometimes get relieved by the Chairman of Committees. It was one of the sights of the House to see Mr. Bowring in his corner seat, softly purring to himself in satisfaction that he, too, was a member of Parliament, could hang his hat and coat in the cloak-room (he once described to his constituents the position of the very peg he had appropriated to this purpose), could jauntily pass the janitors at the brass-

latticed door, cross the sacred bar, walk up the House, bow to the Speaker, and then take his seat so near the First Lord of the Treasury that if he stretched out his hand he could touch the bald place on the top of the right hon. gentleman's head; and it is not difficult to conceive the amount of self-restraint which Mr. Bowring must have imposed upon himself to prevent his sometimes adopting this means of assuring himself that it was not all a dream, that he really was a member of Parliament, and that this warm and comfortable and brilliantly-lighted chamber in which he sat was truly the House of Commons. He was not the rose, but he lived near it, and now he is shut out of the garden, and the high distinction of holding and keeping the first place in the Parliamentary Buff Book will go elsewhere.

Mr. Crawford, "the member for the Bank of England," is gone from these benches, from which also will never more rise the figure of Sir George Grey, both members having voluntarily retired, ostensibly from the same cause of

weariness and failing health. Mr. Otway, an able and honest ex-Minister, and Lord Enfield, an honest and able Minister, both lost their seats; and from these same back Ministerial benches have gone Dr. Brewer, whose disinterested efforts in behalf of the habitual drunkard ought to have earned him that personage's sober gratitude; Mr. Hinde Palmer, who leaves the Married Women's Property Act of 1870 unamended; Mr. Bonham-Carter, who turned out to be one of the most hopeless Chairmen of Committees ever appointed; and Mr. Macfie, whose great *forte* was figures, and his great failing that he could never prevail on a dozen men to sit out his disquisition upon any of their groupings. By way of light distraction Mr. Macfie had of late years taken up the subject of the relations of England to her colonies, and the regret of the Liberal Whip at the issue of the contest in the Leith district was doubtless tempered by the reflection that he would never more see that portentous blue bag crammed to the neck with reports, extracts,

and Blue Books, which Mr. Macfie was wont to drag up the floor of the House on the occasion of his annual speech.

Below the gangway on the Liberal side there have "gone forth" many "who never will return"—at least as long as the present mood of the constituencies prevails. Mr. Auberon Herbert left of his own accord, and in him the House of Commons loses a man whose political honesty was equalled only by his undaunted pluck and his almost womanly gentleness of manner. Mrs. Barrett Browning is one of the few who could have understood and done justice to the nature of Auberon Herbert. Perhaps she did, for if she has not actually sketched the man in 'Aurora Leigh,' the coincidence of likeness is remarkable.

Mr. Herbert never succeeded in making any position in Parliament, being regarded by some as a visionary and by others as a dangerous character. His style of speaking was not attractive, but he once moved the House of Commons in a manner by comparison with

which the supremest efforts of Burke, Fox, Pitt, or Gladstone, sink into nothingness. It happened in the early days of the Session of 1872, on the occasion of a motion by Sir Charles Dilke for enquiry into the expenditure under the Civil List. The scene was lead up to, as most memorable outbreaks in the House of Commons are, in the most unexpected and unpremeditated manner. The eager throng that crowded the galleries allotted to the public looked for something startling when Sir Charles Dilke should rise to speak. It had been rumoured, and the sequel showed that the statement was not without foundation, that the Conservatives intended to meet the motion by rising *en masse*, and leaving Sir Charles to talk to such Liberals as thought the subject of an inquiry into the Civil List one not absolutely forbidden to the representatives of the people. But the count-out was a card held for playing, if necessary at a later stage of the game, and after Lord Bury had succeeded in his constant endeavour of putting

himself *en évidence* on every possible occasion, Sir Charles began his speech to a crowded and attentive House, which, whilst freezingly deprecatory, remained politely attentive till the hon. bart. had brought his monologue to a conclusion. Mr. Gladstone, anxious to make an end of the matter, followed; and it was taken for granted that the incident was closed, and the strangers who had come to see "a scene" remained to mutter their disappointment. Sir Charles Dilke had made his motion, the Prime Minister had replied, both sides of the question were before the public, and so let the matter rest, was the evident wish of the House. But it was not to be. As Mr. Gladstone sat down, Mr. Auberon Herbert, who it was well known desired to advocate the motion, leaped up from his seat beside Sir Charles Dilke, and found himself face to face with such a storm as has rarely beaten against the roof of Saint Stephen's. The country gentlemen, famed in parliamentary annals for

ability to assist the progress of legislation by the utterance of unearthly noises, excelled their historic efforts of the eras of the Reform Bill and the debates on the Corn Law. They roared and yelled and even hissed, lashing themselves into fury as Mr. Herbert stood shouting out something at the top of a voice that was utterly lost in the storm. But even country gentlemen cannot bellow "Divide, Divide!" for more than five minutes at a stretch, and Mr. Herbert, taking cognizance of this fact, husbanded his resources accordingly; and when something, which might by comparison be termed a lull occurred, he looked up to the Press Gallery, and, by a superhuman effort, shouted out two or three words that seemed to reach the reporters. Then the Conservatives brought up their reserve forces, and a sustained yell drowned the speaker's voice. A few minutes more, and the hon. member, perceiving signs of renewed exhaustion in the Opposition benches, continued his speech at the very words at which he had left off; whereupon

the Conservatives came back with a deafening roar, and Mr. Herbert resigned the innings to them. But it became clear that he was winning the game by strategy. No human lungs were equal to the prolongation over an hour of such an effort as the country gentlemen were then making, and whilst even in the full tide of their vigour Mr. Herbert was getting out his speech by piecemeal, it was too evident that when they had shouted themselves hoarse he would come up smiling and say all the horrible things he had at heart. Accordingly a change of tactics was decided upon, and the count-out card was dealt. But it requires two to play at the game, and as Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues would not lend themselves to the effort to stop free discussion by these means, the count-out, thrice essayed, thrice failed, Mr. Herbert profiting by these brief pauses to gain fresh breath and renewed vigour. Thoroughly beaten, the Conservatives finally resorted to the expedient of clearing the House of strangers, with the intention of preventing Mr. Her-

bert's interjections from being reported. But this proceeding did not in the slightest degree affect the hon. member's purpose, and amid a babel of sounds, through which the shrill crowing of the cock could alone be distinguished, he continued his speech for ten minutes more, when, apparently reaching the end, he sat down, and the ferment subsided as quickly as it had arisen.

Sir Henry Hoare, who has gone from this same bench below the gangway, was of much the same school of politics as Mr. Herbert, though he had learned his lessons in a different manner, and when talking of "liberty," "the people," and so forth, would say "I and the people" rather than "the people and I." Mr. James White could not speak extemporaneously, and as the rules of the House forbade him to read his speeches, he did not, except corporeally, make such a figure below the gangway as he perhaps otherwise might have done. Mr. Locke King sat on the front seat when he attended the debates, which was not

a regular occurrence during the last Session. Mr. Locke King did not know his "Newcomes," or he would have made better uses of his closing opportunity. "I had my suspicions when they gave that testimonial," says Fred Bayham, talking about the ruined Colonel and his famous allegorical silver cocoa-nut tree. "In my experience of life, sir, I always feel rather shy about testimonials, and when a party gets one somehow look out to hear of his smashing next month." It was doubtless the last thought in the minds of the guests when Mr. Gladstone and half the Liberal party went to Mr. Locke King's testimonial presentation party in the summer of 1873, that when Parliament met for the Session of 1874 the hero of the evening would be without a seat in the House, and that Mr. Disraeli would lead from the Treasury Bench a majority of fifty.

The first back seat below the gangway has been literally decimated. Mr. Miall is missed, though not for the sake of his charms of oratory. To tell the truth there were few

speakers in the House more painful to listen to. His style was of the worst order of Dissenting preaching, and there was a specially painful vigour in the way he was wont to wrestle with himself for words—pumping them out one by one as if they came from a well in which the gearing had got out of order—that could not be excelled by any young student fresh to the conventicle from college, and desirous of impressing critical deacons with the amount of wisdom which must underlie utterances so weightily deliberate. It is, however, probable that this mannerism, which had of late years grown upon him, was the outcome of that failing health and strength which finally resulted in his retirement from public life; and it speaks eloquently for Mr. Miall's force of character that in spite of such personal disadvantages, and though known as the uncompromising advocate of principles peculiarly obnoxious to the majority of his fellow-members, he always compelled the respectful attention of the House of Commons, and

carried into his retirement the assurance that his absence would be regretted and his place not easily filled.

The ladies have lost a champion in Mr. Jacob Bright; Miscellaneous Causes an umpire in Mr. W. Fowler; and the universe a guardian in Mr. Rylands. Mr. Tom Hughes can be spared from the seat next behind, but Mr. Delahunty is mourned as the only Irishman left in the House of Commons after the departure of Mr. Dowse who combined common sense with a rich, unconscious, natural overwhelming humour. The losses on the other side are, in two instances, distinct gains to what may, without offence now that Mr. Bright has explained the word, be called "the residuum." By the defeat of Colonel Stuart Knox, the House of Commons will be relieved of the presence of a scold, and in Mr. Douglas Straight it loses a young gentleman who wore an aggravating bouquet in his button hole, and emptily talked to the High Court of Parliament as if it were an assembly of solicitors and he a

barrister of the Middle Temple, not to mention the Old Bailey. Sir Herbert Croft is an intelligent country gentleman, best known for his presentation before the debate on the Burials Bill last Session of a petition which, he gravely declared, had been signed by some of his constituents who had "all lived in their parish for centuries." Mr. Henry Matthews was the chivalrous and eloquent defender of his co-religionists against the annual attacks of Mr. Newdegate, and Mr. Tom Collins was the anonymous "hon. member" whom the newspaper reader will have occasionally seen referred to as having "called the attention" of the Speaker to the numbers present. The benefit which Mr. Collins has often conferred upon his species by his bold and skilful use of the only effectual arm the traditions of the House of Commons permit to be used against persistent dulness, bombast, and self-sufficiency, will keep his memory ever green, and in his enforced but let us trust only temporary absence, it is some consolation to know

that several of the principal victims of his successful arts have followed him down the valley, and were not "present to say 'Adsum' when the names were called" in the new Parliament.

CHAPTER II.

THE ORATOR.

> How will you know the pitch of that great bell
> Too large for you to stir? Let but a flute
> Play 'neath the fine-mixed metal: listen close
> Till the right note flows forth, a silvery rill;
> Then shall the huge bell tremble—then the mass
> With liquid waves concurrent shall respond.

If it were conceivable that the fortunes of war had gone hopelessly against Great Britain in her struggle with Ashantee, and that King Koffee Kalcalli, carrying reprisals into the enemy's country, had besieged London, and, imitating Alexander in his treatment of humbled Athens, had demanded the bodies of the orators of the House of Commons, we might find solace in the reflection that not many new writs would have to be moved in

order to fill vacancies consequent upon the fulfilment of the barbarian's vengeful fancy. George Colman the younger, writing of the literary discussions of Tom, Dick, and Will, observes :—

> It cost them very little pains
> To count the modern poets who had brains.
> 'Twas a small difficulty ;—'twasn't any ;
> They were so few :
> But to cast up the scores of men
> Who wield a stump they call a pen,
> Lord ! they had much to do,—
> They were so many !

Making the necessary alterations to suit the case of one reviewing the House of Commons, and counting up the orators and casting up the scores of men who merely talk, this verse precisely describes the preliminary position. It is even startling when, having to set down in black and white the sum of the orators of the House of Commons, running over the list of familiar names and mentally conjuring up the well-known forms in their varied attitudes, speaking in their diverse voices, and uttering their manifold thoughts, we gradually find our

vision narrowing down to the units who stand out from the crowd distinguished by the halo of heaven-born oratory. The present House of Commons consists of 653 members. How many shall we say are orators? It is a picked assembly of educated gentlemen, chosen with the special view to obtaining men who, having thoughts that burn, are further endowed with the gift of giving utterance to them in words that breathe. Shall we say that ten in the hundred are orators?—Five?—One? Alack! no. I believe that if we dispassionately and critically discuss the individual claims of these 653 gentlemen, we shall arrive at the conclusion that there are not more than two who, having earned, may wear the palm of oratory, and these are, Mr. Bright and Mr. Gladstone.

If we enlarge the term "oratory" and narrow its meaning to "parliamentary oratory," we shall be able to include Mr. Disraeli in the review; but not otherwise. The Prime Minister is a successful parliamentary speaker, but his oratorical merits do not range higher.

He lacks two qualities without which true eloquence is impossible—to wit, earnestness and sincere conviction. It is only on the rarest occasions that Mr. Disraeli even affects to be righteously roused; and then he is rather amusing than otherwise. He has a lively fancy, and an art, highly and carefully cultivated, of coining polished phrases, generally personal in their bearing. When these are flashed forth he carries the House with him; but for the rest he is even dull. Just as the merits of the pudding at a school dinner are gauged by the frequency of the plums which occur in a slice, so is the success of Mr. Disraeli's speeches measured by the number of sparkling sentences distributed throughout an oration. The plums are of the best, but the pudding is unquestionably heavy; and of course the actual quantity of the latter is immeasurably greater than that of the former. There are, to tell the truth, few things more dreary in the experience of a Session in the House of Commons than a long speech from Mr. Disraeli.

At short, sharp replies or interrogations he is supremely effective; but when it comes to a long speech the lack of stamina manifests itself, and we have something which, if not occasionally incomprehensible, is often involved. To cite an instance which will be within the personal recollection of readers, Was any one able to follow Mr. Disraeli through that argument about indirect and direct taxation, with special reference to the income tax, with which he a fortnight before the dissolution bewildered the farmers at Aylesbury after having dined with them at their ordinary? He himself evidently staggered under the unwonted weight of the argument, and finally hustled it off his shoulders, returning with a sense of relief, in which his audience shared, to a lighter style.

No one has more accurately gauged Mr. Disraeli's especial abilities than has Mr. Disraeli himself, and he is at his best when, by reason of fortunate circumstances, he is so powerful that he can act untrammelled by foreign influence

We see proof of this in the matter of making long speeches. Whilst he was in opposition, the leader of a party which never loved him, and to which he is linked by bonds of sympathy that are on both sides artificial, he occasionally felt it incumbent upon him to make long speeches. Mr. Gladstone had filled the House for two hours or more with a flood of oratory, and it seemed to some of the more intelligent of Conservatives that "the party" were not fairly treated, and did not by comparison shine, if their leader uttered only half as many words and occupied the attention of the House for but one moiety of the time engrossed by the other side. Mr. Disraeli, answering gallantly to the impulse of the spur, has, under these circumstances, spoken for two hours or even more, with the result of greatly weakening his argument, and damaging his cause and his reputation. Since his advent to power at the head of a great majority, he has felt himself to be above dictation, and the result has been, that although the necessity for

his making set speeches has increased, he never makes a long one. During the Session of 1874 there were some momentous debates in which the Premier interposed to state the views and intentions of the Government; but on no occasion did he speak at so much as an hour's length, and the majority of his speeches did not occupy more than half an hour in the delivery. What was, take it for all in all, perhaps the cleverest speech he ever delivered, that in the Home Rule debate, was commenced and brought to a conclusion within the space of three quarters of an hour. The consequence of this freedom to follow the bent of his genius is recorded in the unanimous verdict of the journals sitting in judgment on the Session—that never in his long career did Mr. Disraeli shine more brilliantly in debate.

It is a defect in Mr. Disraeli's nature, regarding him as a debater, that he is constitutionally inexact. He will take up a phrase uttered by Mr. Gladstone or some other adversary, and whilst yet the echoes of its utter-

ance linger in the ears of his audience, he will paraphrase it in a manner that wrenches it utterly from its original meaning, and straightway proceeds to argue, answer, ridicule, and denounce the imaginary statement. Apart from the question of morality, this does not seem to be a safe or judicious line of action in respect of oral statements. But Mr. Disraeli treats historical events in precisely the same manner. If there is any fact in the history of public men for the last twenty years that is widely known it is that Mr. Gladstone was, next to Lord Aberdeen under whom he served, the most persistent opponent of British participation in the Turko-Russian quarrel of 1853. Yet in his speech at Aylesbury already referred to (and which it should be noted extended over an hour and a half), Mr. Disraeli gave the electors of Buckinghamshire to understand that Mr. Gladstone was personally and solely responsible for the Crimean War! A later instance of this audacious paraphrasing of history appears in the Premier's speech on the un-

veiling of the statue of Lord Derby in Parliament Square. On that occasion he claimed for the late Earl that he had "abolished slavery," "educated Ireland," and rescued from failure the Reform Bill of Earl Grey and Lord John Russell. It would be an interesting and instructive task to review the history of these three great measures, and show exactly what part the late Lord Derby took in their enactment. But, accomplished however briefly, it is obviously beyond the scope of this sketch. It may however be mentioned, as illustrating the mental process by which Mr. Disraeli occasionally arrives at paradoxical and hyperbolical statements, that Lord Derby, then Mr. Stanley, was the Secretary of State for the Colonies in the Government of Earl Grey when the question of the emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies was finally forced upon the Cabinet by the pressure of public opinion. In this capacity Mr. Stanley had charge of the Bill of Emancipation in the House of Commons, which fact fixes itself in Mr. Disraeli's mind and,

looking far over the heads of Wilberforce and Clarkson and Buxton, which latter had made himself the champion of the cause in Parliament and annually, in the face of a hostile House, brought forward a motion for the abolition of slavery, Mr. Disraeli, called upon forty years later to unveil a statue of Lord Derby, hails him in the presence of an applauding multitude as the statesman who "abolished slavery!"

Mr. Disraeli's manner in the House of Commons is one strongly marked, and is, doubtless undesignedly, calculated to increase the personal interest which has for more than a generation been taken in him by the public. Either because his colleagues do not care to chat with him, or because he discourages private conversations in the House, Mr. Disraeli invariably sits apart in a sort of grim loneliness. Mr. Gladstone is, except when he sleeps, rarely quiet for a moment, frequently engaging in conversation with those near him, often laughing heartily himself, and being the cause of laughter in his interlocutors. When Mr. Disraeli

enters the House and takes his accustomed seat, he crosses one leg over the other, folds his arms, hangs down his head, and so sits for hours at a time in statuesque silence. When he rises to speak, he generally rests his hand for a moment upon the table, but it is only for a moment, for he invariably endeavours to gain the ear of his audience by making a point at the outset, and the attitude which he finds most conducive to the happy delivery of points is to stand balancing himself upon his feet with his hands in his coat-tail pockets. In this position, with his head hung down as if he were mentally debating how best to express a thought that had just occurred to his mind, Mr. Disraeli slowly utters the polished and poisoned sentences over which he has spent laborious hours in the closet. Mr. Bright is a great phrase-maker, and comes down to the House with the gems ready cut and polished to fit in the setting of a speech. But no one could guess from Mr. Bright's manner that the phrases he drops in as he goes along are fairly

written out on a slip of paper carried in his waistcoat pocket as he crossed the bar of the House. He has the art to hide his art, and his hearers may well fancy as they watch him speak that they see the process of the formation of the sentences actually going on in the mind of the orator, all aglow as it is with the passion of eloquence. But the merest tyro in the House knows a moment beforehand when Mr. Disraeli is approaching what he regards as a convenient place in his speech for dropping in the phrase-gem he pretends to have just found in an odd corner of his mind. They see him leading up to it; they note the disappearance of the hands in the direction of the coat-tail pockets, sometimes in search of the pocket handkerchief, which is brought out and shaken with a light and careless air, but most often to extend the coat-tails, whilst with body gently rocked to and fro, and an affected hesitancy of speech, the speaker produces his *bon mot*. For the style of repartee in which Mr. Disraeli indulges —which may be described generally as a sort of

solemn chaffing, varied by strokes of polished sarcasm—this manner is admirable, in proportion as it has been seldom observed. But it is monotonous to a degree perhaps exceeded only by that of Mr. Cardwell, who during his last speech on the Army Estimates was timed with a watch, and found to go through the following series of oratorical performances with the regularity of a pendulum, preserving throughout an hour the exact time allotted at the outset to each manœuvre: First, he advanced to the table and rested upon it, leaning his left arm upon the edge; secondly, he stood bolt upright and retired half a pace from the table, letting his arms hang stiffly by his side; thirdly, he put both hands out and arranged the papers before him; fourthly, he retired a full pace, folded his hands behind him under his coat-tails, and again stood bolt upright, looking like an undertaker who had called for orders. This latter was his favourite position, and he remained in it for the longest period. But when the time came to forsake it, he advanced, leaned his arm upon

the table, and again went through the full round of graceful action. Mr. Disraeli is not as bad as this; but his oratorical movements are formed in the same school, and are spoiled by the same defects. Not being an orator by nature, and knowing the necessity of some action while speaking, he stiffly performs a series of bodily jerks, which are as much like the easy, natural gestures of the true orator as is the waddling of a duck across a stubble-field like the progress of a swan over the bosom of a lake.

Mr. Bright, the orator *par excellence* of the House of Commons, is almost precisely the moral and political antithesis of Mr. Disraeli. When Mrs. Sarah Brydges Willyams, of Torquay, left Mr. Disraeli a large fortune "as an expression of her admiration for his political principles," what the world chiefly wondered at was, not the legacy, but the lady's success in discovering what Mr. Disraeli's political principles were. No such mystery hangs about Mr. Bright. Rightly or wrongly, he

holds certain views of how the British Empire ought to be governed; and never once in the course of a long career, run for the greater part under the fierce light that beats upon a man who has achieved power and fame in Parliament, has he departed from the narrow road hedged about by the principles under the guidance of which he entered upon public life. The head of the late Liberal Government has been "the rising hope of stern and unbending Tories." Mr. Disraeli, the present Premier of a Conservative Government, was described thirty years ago as "Mr. D'Israeli, who has now been thirteen years more or less prominently before the public either as an ultra-Radical, seeking to be a joint of O'Connell's tail; as a Liberal, seeking to be elected for a Liberal constituency under the auspices of Sir E. L. Bulwer; or as an ultra-Tory or Tory Radical, actually representing Shrewsbury." But whilst political animosity has passed by no ditch through the mire of which it might drag Mr. Bright, it

has never accused him of speaking with an uncertain sound, or of having upheld yesterday that which he denounces to-day. To an orator this atmosphere of acknowledged sincerity and honest conviction is a mighty power. All men, save those of a low and illiberal order of mind, will listen with respect to one who propounds a theory, however illogical and distasteful it may be, provided they discern, or think they discern, that the man himself is very much in earnest, and is an honest believer in his own statements. When to this conviction is added a reputation slowly built up on the realization of prophecies and plans set forth years ago—then derided and hooted—it will be understood that if Mr. Bright spoke like Lord John Manners, and gesticulated like Mr. Synan, he still would be a great power in parliamentary debate.

But to this strong and sure foundation of character Mr. Bright adds the airy graces of oratory that make the structure of the statesman complete. His manner when speaking is

quiet and subdued, but it is the apparent subjugation which a bar of iron undergoes when it passes from the red-hot stage to the condition of white heat. The red-hot bar splutters and sends forth sparks, and is, on the whole, the more imposing to the passing glance. But there are more heat and power in the quiet-looking bar that steadfastly burns, content without calling attention to the process by occasionally spluttering forth an ineffectual shower of sparks. In the course of a speech Mr. Bright generally manages to say some things damaging to his opponents and helpful to the cause he advocates. But when he sits down, there is invariably a feeling amongst his audience that he has by no means exhausted himself, but could, if he pleased, have said a great deal more that would have been equally effectual. To this end his quiet, self-possessed manner greatly tends. He has himself well in hand throughout his orations, and therefore maintains his hold upon his audience. His gestures are of the fewest; but, unlike Mr.

Disraeli's, they always seem appropriate and natural. A simple wave of the right hand, and the sentence is emphasised. Nature has gifted him with a fine presence and a voice the like of which has but rarely rung through the rafters of St. Stephen's. "Like a bell" is the illustration usually employed in the endeavour to convey by words an impression of its music. But I think it were better to say "like a peal of bells," for a single one could not produce the varied tones in which Mr. Bright suits his expressions to his theme. On the whole the dominant note is one of pathos. Possibly because nearly all Mr. Bright's great speeches have been made when he has been pleading the cause of the oppressed or denouncing a threatened wrong, a tone of melancholy can be heard running through all. And for the expression of pathos, there are marvellously touching tones in his voice, tones which carry right to the listener's heart the tender thoughts that come glowing from the speaker's and are clad in simple words as they pass his tongue.

Who that heard it will ever forget the solemn sentence that fell from the orator's lips nineteen years ago, when the Vienna negotiations for peace with Russia promised to interrupt the Crimean war? "The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the very beating of his wings." This was a bold oratorical flight to take in the House of Commons, which is, above all things practical, and kills by good hearty laughter any approach to mere sentimentality. For a moment the success of the imagery was doubtful. The House trembled between laughter and tears. "If you had said the *flapping* of its wings," said Mr. Cobden to Mr. Bright, as they walked home together after the speech, "we should have gone into a fit of laughter." But Mr. Bright had selected the right word, had fitted it in the right place, and the true pathos of the tones in which the sentence was slowly spoken carried it far above the level of laughter.

Mr. Bright is not only the greatest master

of pathos in the House of Commons, he is also the greatest humourist. He does not lay himself out to be "funny," like Mr. Bernal Osborne, or even like Mr. Disraeli, who is nothing if not amusing. Mr. Bright's humorous sayings come spontaneously, and seem, when they are fitted into the speech he is building up, as if they had been chosen on the spot because they were the very stones that gave to the structure an added symmetry and strength; and not, as in other hands good things often look, as if they were ornamental bricks fashioned at home with loving care and carried about wrapped up in tissue paper lest they should get scratched or have their meretricious glaze dimmed. I have no doubt that Mr. Bright prepares the *bon mots* of his great speeches as carefully as any other man. But there is this difference between him and some others—that they are palpably relieved when they have safely delivered themselves of their treasures, whereas Mr. Bright, whilst he does justice by emphasis to

his own points, is never himself dazzled by their brightness. When Sir William Harcourt was Mr. Vernon Harcourt he often enlivened a debate by some really sparkling epigrams; but their force was more than half lost upon the House by the circumstance that the speaker was himself so tickled with his own fancies that he generally prefaced their expression by an audible chuckle. Mr. Bright's humour is not sardonic like Mr. Disraeli's, but it resembles it inasmuch as its manifestations have chiefly been in the direction of hitting off some person or party by a single phrase, in Mr. Bright's case containing a parallel or a comparison drawn from a source familiar to the least educated mind. Two at least of his happiest strokes of this sort have their inspiration from the Bible. Had Mr. Lowe wanted to say something damaging about Mr. Bright, he would, in all probability, have looked through his Homer or his Horace for an illustration. When Mr. Bright desired, during the debate on the Reform Bill, to cover with ridicule the clique

of which Mr. Lowe was the head, he bethought him of David's escape from Achish, King of Gath, and the character of the people who subsequently foregathered with him in the Cave of Adullam, and a new name was added to the political vocabulary. When, pending the General Election, he had occasion to complain of the determined dissatisfaction of the Conservatives, he again turned to the classical book of the people, and on the morrow all England was laughing at the party who, "if they had been in the wilderness, would have complained of the Ten Commandments as a harassing piece of legislation." Mr. Bright's illustrations, when drawn from other sources, are equally homely, and, therefore, effective. Thus, when he dubbed Mr. Disraeli "the mystery man of the Ministry," and when he likened Mr. Lowe and Mr. Horsman to a Scotch terrier, "of which no one could with certainty say which was the head and which the tail," everybody could comprehend and enjoy the reference. The fearful sting con-

tained in his casual remark about Sir Charles Adderly in a letter to a correspondent who had brought under his notice a misrepresentation of fact of which Sir Charles had permitted himself to indulge in,—"I hope he thought he was speaking the truth, but he is rather a dull man, and is liable to make blunders"—will be best appreciated by those who know the right honourable baronet. But the volume of sarcasm hidden in the parenthetical remark about the gentleman's ancestors who came over with the Conqueror—"I never heard that they did anything else"—is plain reading for all. So is the well-merited retort upon a noble lord who, during a time when Mr. Bright was temporaily laid aside by illness, took the opportunity of publicly declaring that, by way of punishment for the uses he had made of his talents, Providence had inflicted upon Mr. Bright a disease of the brain. "It may be so," said Mr. Bright to the House of Commons when he came back; "but in any case, it will be some consolation to the friends and family

of the noble lord to know that the disease is one which *even Providence* could not inflict upon him."

In comparing Mr. Gladstone with Mr. Bright it would be just to say, rather that he has made more faulty speeches than Mr. Bright, than that Mr. Bright has made some greater speeches than Mr. Gladstone. Taken speech for speech, it is probable that we should find in the collection of Mr. Gladstone's orations twenty that would not suffer by comparison with any score of Mr. Bright's. But Mr. Bright's speeches are always oratorical successes, and Mr. Gladstone's are not. This is obviously the fault of Mr. Gladstone's long held official position, which called upon him to make speeches at all seasons and upon all possible subjects, whereas Mr. Bright has been accustomed to speak only when he felt "a call," and has been at liberty to choose his own subjects. Mr. Gladstone's official position is further responsible for a defect in his oratorical style which would be fatal to a man

of less oratorical genius. A man speaking from the Opposition Benches or below the gangway on either side has an immense advantage over one who is handicapped because he has won a race that landed him on the Treasury Bench. Mr. Lowe thus weighted was a very different person from the brilliant free-lance who used to smite hip and thigh any force he might chance to find in any field he rode by. Mr. Gladstone was for many years equally fettered, but he wore his chains in a different manner. Mr. Lowe can do very well without speaking, and would cheerfully draw his quarterly salary, sit on the Treasury Bench from February to July, and never open his lips in debate. That is a state of affairs under which Mr. Gladstone simply could not exist. He is, constitutionally, perpetually in that condition in which Justice Shallow found himself when challenged by Pistol to declare "under which King" he held his authority—he must "speak or die." During the troublesome times of the Session of 1873, Mr. Glad-

stone was daily one of the first to take his seat on the Treasury Bench and the last to leave it, and whilst there he talked for himself and all his colleagues. It has been said by an adverse critic that under his administration the Government was simply a dictatorship, with a set of clerks sitting at desks labelled "Secretary of State for War," "First Lord of the Admiralty," "Chancellor of the Exchequer," etc., whose function it was occasionally to supply data for the declarations of the Dictator. This is quite as true as are the average of caricatures, for it has not unfrequently happened that, in the case of questions naturally put to the head of one or other of the State Departments, Mr. Gladstone has risen from the side of the hon. or right hon. gentleman addressed and taken on himself the task of furnishing an answer. His impromptu replies were on the average equal in length and ponderosity to an ordinary man's set speech, and sometimes the newspapers, reporting the debates in Parliament, have on a

single morning presented as many as six speeches from Mr. Gladstone on various subjects. This unhappy propensity for talking fostered a defect which is faintly discernible in his earlier and better manner. His native wealth of words is unbounded. He can say "twice two are four" in a half-a-dozen ways, each varied in the construction of the sentence, and yet each so cunningly linked to the other that if we might forget the simple obviousness of the fact originally asserted, we could not fail to be struck with admiration for the skill by which we were being led through various avenues all converging on the one point that two and two really make four. Reasonably confident as he may well be of his verbal resources, Mr. Gladstone springs up to answer a question affecting his administration, and pours forth a flood of talk in which, as in a whirlpool, the bewildered listener is carried round and round till such time as the speaker has fully resolved the question in his own mind and decided what he shall say, which done,

the rotatory motion ceases, and the matter is disposed of in a sentence. This is a great gift —to be able to talk what sounds like sense, to seem to be really answering a question, and yet to commit yourself to nothing till such time as you have deliberately decided what you may judiciously say—but its exercise should be spared for great occasions. Mr. Gladstone avails himself of it continually, and by force of habit it has coloured his whole style, making it verbose and involved. It is said that up in the Press Gallery the reporters, whilst they are in the habit of following out the meaning of ordinary speakers as sentence by sentence they evolve it, gave up the task in the case of Mr. Gladstone. It is often hopeless to endeavour to discern for what goal his sentences, with their involutions, their qualifications, and their parenthetical subdivisions, are bound; and so, as the right honourable gentleman has usually to be reported in full, the sentences are mechanically taken down in shorthand with the hope

that they "will read" when they come to be written out. And this is a hope which is never falsified. The lengthiest and most portentous of Mr. Gladstone's sentences always have a clear and distinct thread of meaning running through them, and may be written out for the press as they are taken down from his lips without the alteration of a single word. The pity of it is that the thread is painfully attenuated in consequence of being stretched over such an unconscionably long course.

It is in a great debate, when the armies of political parties are set in battle array, that Mr. Gladstone's transcendent abilities as an orator alone have full play. When before rising to speak he has definitively made up his mind which of "three" or more "courses" he shall take, and has nothing to do but declare his colours, build around them a rampart of argument, and seek to rally to them halting friends, then the marvellous clearness of his perception and his unusual ability for making dark places light is disclosed. After purport-

ing to answer a simple question, and taking a quarter of an hour to do it in, Mr. Gladstone has sometimes sat down leaving the House in a condition of dismayed bewilderment, hopelessly attempting to grope its way through the intricacies of the sonorous sentences it has been listening to. But if he desires to make himself understood, there is no one who can better effect the purpose. There are few instances of a Government measure which met with more determined and diversely motived opposition than the Irish University Act introduced in the Session of 1873. It is a matter of history that it broke the power of the strongest Ministry that has ruled England in these latter days. The provisions of the measure were singularly intricate, but when Mr. Gladstone sat down after speaking for upwards of three hours in explanation of the measure, he had not only made it clear from preamble to schedule, but he had momentarily talked the House of Commons over into the belief that this was a Bill it would do well

to accept. Mr. Horsman has been much laughed at because whilst the glamour of this great speech was still strong upon him, he wrote an enthusiastic letter to the *Times* hailing Mr. Gladstone and his Bill as among the most notable of recent dispensations of a beneficent Providence: words which he subsequently ate in the presence of a crowded House. But Mr. Horsman differed from seven-eighths of the House of Commons only in this, that he put pen to paper whilst he was yet under the influence of the orator's spell, whereas the rest of the members contented themselves by verbal and private expressions of opinion.

Mr. Gladstone's oratorical manner is much more strongly marked by action than is Mr. Bright's. He emphasises by smiting his right hand in the open palm of his left; by pointing his finger straight out at his adversary, real or representative; and, in his hottest moments, by beating the table with his clenched hand. Sometimes in answer to cheers he turns right

round to his immediate supporters on the benches behind him, and speaks directly to them; whereupon the Conservatives, who hugely enjoy a baiting of the emotionable ex-Premier, call out "Order! order!" This call seldom fails in the desired effect of exciting the right hon. gentleman's irascibility, and when he loses his temper his opponents may well be glad. Mr. Bright always writes out the peroration of his speeches, and at one time was accustomed to send the slip of paper to the reporters. Mr. Disraeli sometimes writes out the whole of his speeches. The one he delivered to the Glasgow students in November, 1873, was in type in the office of a London newspaper at the moment the right hon. gentleman was speaking at the University. Mr. Gladstone never writes a line of his speeches, and some of his most successful ones have been made in the heat of debate, and necessarily without preparation. His speech in winding up the debate on the Irish University Bill has rarely been ex-

celled for close reasoning, brilliant illustration, and powerful eloquence; yet if it be referred to it will be seen that it is for the greater and best part a reply to the speech of Mr. Disraeli, who had just sat down, yielding the floor to his rival half an hour after midnight.

Evidence of the same swift reviewing of a position, and of the existence of the same power of instantly marshalling arguments and illustrations, and sending them forth clad in a panoply of eloquence, is apparent in Mr. Gladstone's speech when commenting on Mr. Disraeli's announcement of the withdrawal of the main portion of the Endowed Schools Act Amendment Bill. The announcement, and especially the manner in which it was made, was a surprise that almost stunned and momentarily bewildered the House of Commons. Mr. Gladstone was bound to speak, and to speak the moment Mr. Disraeli resumed his seat. He had no opportunity to take counsel, and no time to make preparations for his speech; but the result of his masterly

oration at this crisis was that the unpopularity and dissatisfaction created by the course he had taken in the matter of the Regulation of Public Worship Bill melted like snow in the firelight, and the conviction was borne in upon his discontented followers that as long as Mr. Gladstone lived and chose to hold the office, there was no other Leader possible for the Liberal party.

It is speeches like these that add poignancy to the regret with which we think of Mr. Gladstone's every-day style of talking, and that cause us eagerly to welcome the signs visible in the records of the Session of 1874 that, relieved from the trammels of office and the fancied necessity for incessant speech-making, he may hereafter be content to speak less frequently and in fewer words.

CHAPTER III.

THE OFFICIAL MEMBER.

A man to be excellent in this way must not only be variously gifted, but his gifts should be nicely proportioned to one another. He must have in a high degree prudence, not merely of a cautious and quiescent order, but that which being ever actively engaged, is more fitly called discretion than prudence. Such a man must have an almost ignominious love of details, blended (and this is a rare combination) with a high power of imagination, enabling him to look along extended lines of possible action and put these details in their right places. He requires a great knowledge of character, with that exquisite tact which feels unerringly the right moment when to act.

Sir Arthur Helps.

No one familiar with the present House of Commons and with that which it has superseded can fail to be struck with the difference in the atmosphere of the two assemblies. The House dispersed by the dissolution that startled the world in January 1874 seemed built over a volcano, or, to adopt a more strictly Parlia-

mentary illustration, on cellars filled with gunpowder. No member sticking his card in the back of his seat before prayers on a given day in the closing Session could feel positively assured that before his temporary lease had lapsed a Ministerial crisis might not have arrived. Crises more or less serious were of weekly occurrence, and if the number of times Mr. Gladstone declared that he should regard the current proceedings as a vote of want of confidence in Her Majesty's Ministers could be ascertained and summed up the result would be astounding. There were so many latent questions of prime importance strewed over the floor of the House, that hon. members could scarcely go about their ordinary business without treading upon one of them. One night, for example, during a drowsy discussion in Committee on the Juries Bill, Mr. Magniac suddenly, and I believe unconsciously, raised the whole question of Local Taxation. It was at the dinner hour, when scarcely fifteen members were present, of whom, as it unfortunately

happened, Mr. Gladstone was one. A more adroit leader would, in all probability, have prolonged the slumber in which the right hon. gentleman appeared to be locked while Mr. Magniac was speaking, and would have trusted to the real tendency of the amendment escaping the attention of the House, as it had evidently escaped that of the mover. If it came to a division its rejection was certain, and the whole matter might have been comfortably disposed of before Mr. Disraeli came back from dinner. But Mr. Gladstone moved uneasily in his sleep as the sound of the speaker's voice floated round him. Presently he was wide awake and had caught the full meaning of the amendment, which indirectly sought to pledge the Government to a distinct policy in a matter on which they had not yet declared themselves. Mr. Stansfeld was sent for, and after a brief consultation the Premier was on his legs, earnestly combating the arguments of Mr. Magniac, much to the marvel of the odd thirteen sleeping members and to the surprise

of the hon. member for St. Ives, who learnt for the first time that he, a good Ministerialist, had been talking treason. Instantly all was animation in the lobbies, the library, the dining-room, and the tea-room. Mr. Disraeli was summoned; the front Opposition Bench filled, as if by magic; the House was thronged; an animated discussion arose, and about midnight Mr. Gladstone was compelled to consent to the reporting of progress, and the debate was adjourned with a view to the marshalling of forces for a pitched battle. In the meantime the Juries Bill, which otherwise might on this night have passed through Committee, was temporarily shelved.

This is one of a score of instances that crowd upon the recollection as we think of the late House of Commons and of the electrical atmosphere which it breathed. But we have changed all that with the change of Ministry. The present House of Commons, as far as it has at present developed its characteristics, is, except in matters affecting religious beliefs, a

sober, business-like assembly, that comes down to get a certain amount of work performed, and is chiefly concerned to run through it as quickly as possible, and "so home to bed." For this marked alteration in demeanour the change in the *personnel* of the Ministry is undoubtedly principally accountable. It is impossible to conceive a more complete contrast than that presented by the principal men in the late and the present Governments. Mr. Disraeli *vice* Mr. Gladstone, Sir Stafford Northcote *vice* Mr. Lowe, Mr. Hardy *vice* Mr. Cardwell, Mr. Ward Hunt *vice* Mr. Goschen, Lord George Hamilton *vice* Mr. Grant Duff, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach *vice* the Marquis of Hartington, Mr. Cross *vice* Mr. Bruce, Lord Henry Lennox *vice* Mr. Ayrton! Is not the marshalling of these names a chapter in itself? Both the men and the circumstances under which public affairs are administered are radically the opposites of each other. All Mr. Gladstone's colleagues were stars, and all his undertakings heroic. Mr. Disraeli appears to

have so selected the bulk of his colleagues that he might paraphrase the famous boast attributed to Lord Brougham,—"The Whigs are all ciphers and I am the only unit in the cabinet that gives a value to them." He has been content to surround himself with men of whom, as individuals, no great things are expected, and his policy upon taking office, a policy approved by a nation somewhat wearied out by the rack of expectancy upon which it had been stretched for the preceding five years, was to do nothing in a manner as harmless and as pleasant as possible.

> Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
> And in a little while our lips are dumb.
> Let us alone. What is it that will last?
> All things are taken from us ——

(including the Irish Church revenues, the right of the Irish landlord to do what he liked with his own, the privilege of purchase in the army, the right to know how our dependants vote, and, virtually, the control of the education of our poorer neighbours' children)——

> All things are taken from us and become
> Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
> Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
> To war with evil? Is there any peace
> In ever climbing up the climbing wave?

This slumberous, petulant murmur of the Lotos-eaters expresses fairly enough the spirit of the Ministry when first seated on the Treasury Bench, and, up to within the last six weeks of the close of the Session, it succeeded in pervading the House of Commons in a manner marvellous to behold.

For such a policy as is herein indicated Mr. Disraeli is a Heaven-born leader. He possesses in a remarkable degree the great gift of silence, which is absolutely requisite in a Minister leading the House of Commons in epochs like that which succeeded the vigorous and soaring Government of Mr. Gladstone. It has always been the fatal fault of Mr. Gladstone, regarded as a Parliamentary leader, that he could not from time to time sit still and say nothing. Mr. Disraeli can, and the advantage he has hereby occasionally gained over his great rival has

been enormous. There is a passage in 'Coingsby'—a book which opens more windows looking on the soul of Mr. Disraeli than are to be found in all his other utterances bound in a volume—which recurs to the mind in a study of the Premier as a Parliamentary leader. "A leader who can inspire enthusiasm," says the author, "he commands the world. Divine faculty! Rare and incomparable privilege! A Parliamentary leader who possesses it doubles his majority; and he who has it not may shroud himself in artificial reserve, but he will nevertheless be as far from controlling the spirit as from captivating the hearts of his sullen followers." The preface to the volume in which this passage occurs is dated exactly thirty years ago. "May Day, 1844," wrote Mr. Disraeli, little dreaming how a quarter of a century later this curious fashion of dating epistles should in the case of "Maundy Thursday" create quite a sensation throughout the empire and lead to the penning of innumerable leading articles. Mr. Disraeli

was at the period a young man, shining in Parliament and society it is true, but with a glittering uncertain light that did not inspire in the mind of the unprejudiced beholder any confidence in its continuance. Like his own Coningsby, he had a circle of attached friends, "all men whose position forced them into public life," forming "a nucleus of honour, faith, and power," and lacking only a leader who would "dare." It is conceivable that at this epoch Mr. Disraeli set out with the hope of "inspiring enthusiasm" and so "commanding the world." The effort, if made, is one in which he has conspicuously failed, and in the picture he drew thirty years ago of the leader shrouding himself in artificial reserve we have a curiously exact portrait of himself, whilst he sketches Mr. Gladstone in the opposite panel.

Happily for the Premier, the power of inspiring enthusiasm is not needed for the discharge of the official duties of a leader of the House of Commons, and, in fact its possession is in this connection actually

detrimental. Partly for this reason Mr. Disraeli, as an official member, stands as far above Mr. Gladstone as Mr. Gladstone, regarded as an orator, towers above Mr. Disraeli. The one has a tact, a ready wit, and an imperturbability of temper of which the other has often shown himself distressingly deficient. As a statesman, Lord Palmerston fell far short of the just renown of Mr. Gladstone; but when we think of the qualities by which Lord Palmerston ruled the House of Commons, and mentally compare them with the temperament of the author of the Irish Land Bill and the Irish Church Bill, we perceive why under the leadership of the latter the House should often have grown riotous, and how it came to pass that the progress of public business has frequently been delayed. Mr. Gladstone always took matters *au sérieux*. He answered an interrogation by a speech, had "three courses" for choice in the most trivial dilemma, and, forgetting that it is not the business of eagles to catch flies, thrust himself into debates which

were far better left to the subordinate officers of his Government. Had he been on the Treasury Bench when, one night in the Session of 1874, Mr. Whalley proposed to add two names to a Committee on Privileges, he would almost certainly have opposed the motion, stating his reasons in a convincing speech. Mr. Whalley would have risen to speak, a scene of uproar would have followed, and much valuable time would have been lost. Mr. Disraeli, perceiving at a glance that it did not matter the toss of a button whether the two gentlemen named by Mr. Whalley were on or off the Committee, simply said that he "saw no objection to the proposal," and it was settled in five minutes. The Premier does not aspire to the jaunty manner of Lord Palmerston in dealing with official work in the House, but he has an easy conversational way of disposing of it which is not less efficacious, and he carefully distinguishes between the duty of making a speech and the accident of answering a question. He is a

much less anxious man than his predecessor in office, and with him on the box there is considerably less creaking of the wheels of the chariot of State than we have been accustomed to during recent Sessions.

Regarded on the higher ground of a tactician, Mr. Gladstone must again yield the palm to Mr. Disraeli. The latter, never losing his self-possession, is watchful and wary, quick to see, bold in design, and brilliant in execution. His action in the matter of the Regulation of Public Worship Bill would of itself be sufficient to raise him to supreme rank as a political commander. This Bill, when introduced in the House of Lords by the Archbishop of Canterbury, seemed from the standpoint of the newly established Premier like the cloud no bigger than a man's hand, which there was much reason to fear might presently overspread the political sky with a thunderous canopy. Hitherto all had gone well with the Government. The minority in the House of Commons was docile, and the majority enthu-

siastic. Nobody, except the Irish members, objected to anything. The estimates had been passed with almost unparalleled celerity; promises of "consideration" were accepted as thankfully as if they were actual concessions; Mr. Ward Hunt's blundering had been condoned; and on the whole a roseate hue suffused the Treasury Bench. But this attempt to regulate public worship in the Church of England would inevitably spoil everything. The ominous cries of "Shibboleth!" and "Sibboleth!" would resound through the whilome peaceful assembly, and, in the earnest and conscientious endeavour to settle matters in the true spirit of Christianity, a deplorable amount of hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness would be engendered. It was an unfortunate affair; but it had to be encountered, and Mr. Disraeli met it at the outset in a characteristic manner. "Can't we let it alone?" a former Prime Minister was accustomed to say when asked what should be done in a disagreeable business. For many weeks Mr. Disraeli

let the Regulation of Public Worship Bill alone, and in due course received the reward of his reticence.

Mr. Gladstone's course of procedure in respect to this same Bill was also eminently characteristic, and a consideration of it is helpful in assisting us to master the secret of his partial failure as a politician. In the early part of the session he had withdrawn from the House of Commons, and it was generally understood that he had no intention of returning, purposing to take a twelve-months' rest. This understanding having been arrived at before anything was heard of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Bill, no possible charge could have rested against Mr. Gladstone had he remained at home and watched the battle from afar. Even after he had varied from his implied intention by taking a prominent part in the debate on the Scotch Church Patronage Bill, no obligation weighed upon him to make a re-appearance on the second reading of the measure affecting the

English Church. One Bill involved a political principle in the extension of which he had, in relation to the Irish Church, played a historic part, and it was natural enough that he should watch over its further development. The other Bill related to a question of church procedure, with which his name was not connected, save, perhaps, as a *suspect*. Political considerations made it urgently desirable that he should keep out of the pending contest. Whatever side he espoused he was certain to make enemies, and the side whither, as it proved he was inclined, was that against which were arrayed the vast majority of the House of Commons, including nearly all his own following.

Under such circumstances Mr. Disraeli would have stopped at home, and thanked his stars for the fortunate concatenation of circumstances that had placed him there at that juncture. Mr. Gladstone did exactly the reverse. He held strong opinions on the Regulation of Public Worship Bill, and with a

full knowledge of the blow he was striking at his own position, he returned once more to the House of Commons and laid his famous six resolutions on the table amid the sad silence of his friends and the secret exultation of his adversaries. It was then that Mr. Disraeli's genius as a tactician blazed forth. Up to this moment he had hampered himself with no word of consent, dissent, or indifference to the Bill. He had sat silent and sphinx-like on the Treasury Bench whilst all the House was in a ferment, and whilst Mr. Gathorne Hardy had risen from his side to denounce the Bill, and Lord Sandon had come forward to support it, Sir W. Harcourt, on the front opposition bench, meanwhile taking upon himself to arraign Mr. Gladstone's conduct. But when the ex-Premier had thus fatally and completely caught himself in the meshes of his six resolutions, Mr. Disraeli saw his own career open out broad and straight amid the devious maze into which the House had strayed. Suddenly waking up from his immobile atti-

tude, the Premier, with well-affected emotion, declared that the interests at stake in the Bill—which a fortnight earlier, when making a statement touching the course of business, he had studiously pointed out was not a Government measure, and had placed in order of precedence at the tail of a list of a dozen bills—were so vast that, in short, everything else must give way till the issues raised were settled. And so a special night was set apart for debate upon Mr. Gladstone's resolutions, a debate the certain result of which would obviously be to widen still further the breach that stood between the Leader and his party, and, perhaps, to leave him fatally and for ever isolated. Mr. Gladstone now saw his error and, with what hurt to his proud spirit will probably never be fully known, retired. But his retreat was a forced and a hurried one, and though it averted final disaster, it was none the less a personal triumph for Mr. Disraeli, and demonstrated anew his immense superiority over his rival in the arts of party management.

Of all Mr. Disraeli's lieutenants in the House of Commons, Sir Stafford Northcote perhaps stands highest. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is a Tory of the school of Sir Robert Peel, of whom he may, by a process analogous to that by which we reach "the rope" in the story of The House that Jack Built, be also considered the pupil. He was for some years the private secretary of Sir Robert Peel's great disciple, Mr. Gladstone, and has, as his speeches frequently show, profited by the proximity. In forming his Ministry Mr. Disraeli seems to have sought for contrasts to the *personnel* of the late Government, even to the points of beard and whisker. On other grounds it is impossible to conceive a more complete contrast than that presented by Sir Stafford and his two immediate predecessors in the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Gladstone raised the exposition of the Budget to the level of the highest oratorical displays of the Session. In Mr. Lowe's time the Budget

night was an event of importance beyond the limits of the interest that attached to the disclosure of the Ministerial financial programme. Sir Stafford Northcote has brought the Budget speech down to little more than a dry business statement inflated rather than adorned by argument and illustration. Whittier might have been thinking of him instead of the late Mr. Sumner when he wrote,

> No sense of humour dropped its oil
> On the hard ways his purpose went;
> Small play of fancy lightened toil,
> He spake alone the thing he meant.

It must be added that the right hon. gentleman, whilst generally succeeding in making perfectly clear what he would say, is somewhat prone to be prosy. He "hums" and "has," and harks back to matters he has already discussed, makes prolonged diversions into bye-paths, and, putting the fact moderately, is twice as long saying what he has at heart as is either necessary or, in the interest of his argument, desirable. In introducing his first Budget he

spoke for two hours and forty minutes, which, it may be urged, was not an extravagant demand on the attention of the House, seeing that when Mr. Gladstone, twenty-one years earlier, brought in his first Budget he spoke for five hours. But it is well known that, generally for sufficient reasons, one man may steal a horse whilst it is forbidden to another to look over the hedge. A harsh dry voice, a countenance expressionless perhaps by reason of a superabundance of hair, an unsympathetic manner, and an almost total absence of the charm of imagination or fancy, combine to make two hours and a half of Sir Stafford Northcote worse than twenty-four hours of Mr. Gladstone. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is, however, a safe business man, and in the temper in which Parliament met was a welcome foil to the brilliancy of his predecessors.

In the case of his immediate forerunner this brilliancy was, it must be admitted, a matter of faith rather than of sight. The reputation

made by Mr. Lowe whilst he was a dweller in the Cave of Adullam pitched high the expectation of the House whenever, in the early days of his occupancy, he rose from the Treasury Bench. But I cannot at the moment call to mind any occasion when this expectation was fully satisfied. By far the best speech Mr. Lowe has delivered of late years was that in which, addressing the electors of London University upon the dissolution of Parliament, he attacked his ancient foeman Mr. Disraeli. This was done in his best old manner, a manner which he had apparently found unsuited for a Cabinet Minister speaking in Parliament, and had consequently temporarily abandoned. Good or indifferent, Mr. Lowe's speeches are of the class of oratory which is better when reported than when listened to. His voice is not an attractive one, and it suffers sorely in the delivery. Possibly the outside public will find a difficulty in believing it, but it is nevertheless true that Mr. Lowe is a bashful speaker. When he

comes to a point in his speech he seems half afraid that it will not succeed, and goes some way towards realising his fears by hanging down his head and nervously jerking out the concluding portion of the sentence, wherein the sting generally lies, in a low, broken tone that frequently fails to reach one-half his hearers. He is, furthermore, afflicted with near-sightedness, and on Budget nights, when recurrence to documents was of momentary necessity, the spectacle of the Chancellor of the Exchequer holding within an inch of his eyebrows a piece of paper—generally the wrong piece at first—hurriedly glancing over it, quoting figures, and immediately correcting his quotations, was a spectacle not calculated to engender either confidence or pleasure. Mr. Lowe's manner of answering questions was wont much to amuse the House before repetition palled upon the appetite. If the question might be answered by the monosyllable "yes" or "no," "yes" or "no" was the full extent of Mr. Lowe's answer. Essentially a com-

bative man he threw a challenge into an answer relating to the tax on agricultural horses, and implied his scorn of mankind generally in a statement touching the legacy duty. Like the "noble peasant," sung by Crabbe,

> Of no man's presence Isaac felt afraid,
> At no man's questions Isaac looked dismayed.

Unfortunately we cannot continue the quotation, and add to the description of Mr. Lowe,

> Yet while the serious thought his soul approved,
> Cheerful he seemed and gentleness he loved;
> To bliss domestic he his heart resigned,
> And with the firmest had the fondest mind.

One thing should be added to his credit, that he had a wholesome contempt for purposeless talk, and once horrified a number of estimable gentlemen who had occupied a whole night in a discussion on a forthcoming Budget by curtly promising to consider their "interesting conversation," and so resuming his seat. They thought they had

been "debating," and have probably never forgiven the scornful Chancellor of the Exchequer for reminding them that they were only conversing.

That Mr. Cross should have been invited to take office in the new Conservative Ministry was not a matter of great surprise; the marvel of it was that at a single bound the junior member for South-west Lancashire should rise from the position of a private member to the post of Home Secretary and the rank of Privy Councillor. Yet upon reflection we perceive that since his re-appearance in the House in 1868 Mr. Cross has displayed several of those qualities which are required in a Home Secretary, and we honour the fairness of Mr. Disraeli's choice, and the boldness with which he passed by more distinguished candidates for office and opened the path of promotion to the foot of talent. It is true that Mr. Cross has not given unqualified satisfaction in the discharge of his duties; but it is also true that there never was a Home Secretary who did.

Whilst yet a private member, Mr. Cross was notable for an assiduous attention to business, a mastery of detail, a shrewd insight into affairs, a capacity to take common-sense views of things, and an ability to express himself in plain, intelligent speech. These are some of the things that are needful for a Home Secretary, and, as Home Secretaries go, Mr. Cross has fairly justified Mr. Disraeli's choice. Undoubtedly he failed in his management in Committee of the Licensing Act Amendment Bill. There was an epoch when he quite lost his head, offering one thing in the evening, modifying it at midnight, and withdrawing it altogether on the following morning. But it is only fair to remember that the measure under his charge *was* the Licensing Bill, with which, it has by common consent been agreed, no human being can deal satisfactorily. Mr. Cross's speaking has not improved in point of style since he found a seat on the Treasury Bench. A tendency to prolixity has developed itself in an

alarming manner, the right hon. gentleman evidently thinking that it is incumbent upon a Home Secretary to expand into a speech that which a private member might have said in a sentence. In a Ministry happily remarkable for brevity of speech at "question time," the Home Secretary is notorious for the wordiness of his replies. This is possibly owing to the temporary existence of the intense delight which a good plain man experiences in finding himself suddenly and unexpectedly in the position of Her Majesty's Chief Secretary of State for the Home Department. Mr. Cross lingers round the discharge of his Parliamentary duties of speech like a child dallies with a last sugar plum. He is as absorbingly proud of his office as a little boy newly breeched is of his unaccustomed garment, being so far carried away by the feeling that, finding himself in the Isle of Man during the recess of 1874, he called in at the House of Keys, and not only showed the members the new Home Secretary, but made a speech to them

in character. This is, however, a pardonable enthusiasm that will wear off in time, leaving us for Home Secretary a sensible, amiable, shrewd man of business, but neither a strong man nor a great administrator.

Mr. Cross's lieutenant, Sir H. Selwin-Ibbetson, who used to be a fearful bore when he was a private member, is, temporarily only it is to be feared, tamed by the chains of office, and always seems glad to find himself once more safe on the Treasury Bench without having perilled the British Constitution by inadvertent or indiscreet observations. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach also displays this wholesome timidity, his manner being in marked contrast to that of the noble lord whom he succeeds. The Marquis of Hartington had none of the supercilious manner of Mr. Ayrton, but, equally with a colleague in whose companionship he must have joyed, his lordship possessed the art of making his audience thoroughly understand that, what with their questions, their objections, and their sugges-

tions, they were decidedly obnoxious and altogether unnecessary people, and that if they would just leave the affairs of the department in the hands of him who, however unwillingly, addressed them, it would be a great deal better for the country. For the heir to a dukedom and revenues untold, the Marquis of Hartington was a most exemplary member of Parliament, being constantly in his place in the House, and invariably at hand when the division bell rang, just as if he were a Taper or a Tadpole, or even a Right Hon. Nicholas Rigby. But he never spoke unless he were absolutely obliged, and then said as little as possible. There was a surliness about his manner that did not make him an attractive speaker; but then, as I have said, he is the eldest son of a duke, and on the whole was acceptable to the House of Commons, and even partially awed the Irish members. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach appears to have entered upon his office with the determination to be, at least, less overbearing in manner than his noble

predecessor, and in succeeding he has vindicated the power of politeness and consideration for the feelings of others. Owing to the exceptional force of the Irish contingent, and the obligation thereby felt to be imposed upon them to occupy an increasingly large share of the time of the British Parliament, the Irish Secretary's part was, in the session of 1874, beset with unusual petty difficulties. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach met them with unvarying good temper, and a display of judgment and tact for which his previous Parliamentary career had scarcely prepared the House.

The Hon. Robert Bourke, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has not as yet had any opportunity of proving his possession of those administrative abilities which the House is well inclined to credit him with. He succeeds a painstaking and efficient man, who was a good deal before the House in the course of a Session. A rapid, glib speaker, Lord Enfield always showed himself well posted up in the details of his office, and had a concilia-

tory way of addressing the House that was quite refreshing after experience of the manner of the great majority of his colleagues. Mr. C. S. Read never made any pretensions to oratory, and never had them put forth on his account. A plain, straightforward, practical speaker, whom men listen to for what he has to say, not for his manner of saying it. In this respect he is the counterpart of Sir Massey Lopes, though, on the whole, perhaps, of a higher mental calibre, and certainly capable of taking wider views than the champion of the Local Taxation Relief agitators, who has been made a Junior Lord of the Admiralty. Mr. W. H. Smith is an able and indefatigable Financial Secretary to the Treasury. He is, moreover, a plain, clear, sensible, judicious speaker, who always seems to see the right thing at the right moment, and makes known his discovery in a modest manner which the House relishes as a rare luxury.

His immediate colleague in office, Mr. Hart Dyke, is a young man to be chief whip to the

Government, and whilst yet he was lieutenant to Colonel Taylour had some juvenile ways which time will possibly mend. It was curiously provoking to have Mr. Hart Dyke appearing several times in the course of a sitting, to see him stand in the centre of the line that marks the bar of the House, and with his hands in his pockets slowly survey the assembly as if it were a marionnette show and he the registered proprietor. In the Session of 1873 Mr. Hart Dyke persistently wore brown gaitered boots, and on a night when a great division was pending, the sight of those little brown gaiters twinkling about the bar became to the highly strung nerves positively insupportable. Mr. Glyn managed to get through his really important business with far less bustle. He was always about the House, bright, cheerful, good-tempered, and ready. When a hard fate made him a peer both sides of the House felt that the place seemed scarcely what it used to be, and all regretted that they should never more hear his rapid stuttering cry "Ayes to

the right, f-f-four hundredandone. Noes to the left, f-f-fifty-three!" Among his many qualifications as a successful whip, Mr. Glyn possessed a rare and indescribable power of throwing into the tone of his announcements of divisions a delicate yet unmistakable intimation of the hopelessness of opposing the Ministry. An altogether different personage from his dapper junior and from his sprightly opponent is Colonel Taylour, chief whip on the Conservative side whilst his party was in opposition, and now Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. A big, loosely-jointed man, whose careless attire was ever a silent reproach to the coxcombry of Mr. Hart Dyke. No one unacquainted with the fact would have divined that the heavy-looking man who occasionally strode across the floor of the House a few minutes before a division was called held in his hands all the strings which, pulled, recorded the votes of a great party. But he did, and so held them that on more than one occasion he surprised the House and fluttered Mr. Glyn by

running an actually strong Government so close that the Ministerial victory was rather a mortification than a triumph.

Mr. Sclater-Booth has been in office before, and is a painstaking, useful man, but not of the sort to fill the House at the dinner hour. Sir Charles Adderley has a great reputation as an authority on Colonial affairs, for which reason, perhaps, Mr. Disraeli did not make him Colonial Secretary. Mr. Bright has written of the right hon. baronet "He is a dull man;" and I do not think the accuracy of the description would be increased by amplification. Lord Henry Lennox was, after the death of Mr. Corry, the Opposition Naval critic, and so has been made Chief Commissioner of Works, in which capacity he will have nothing to do with ships. There was a promising truculence in the manner in which Lord Henry was wont to throw up his feet against the table and, whilst the Navy Estimates were being moved, gaze complacently upon a pair of legs which only in a frenzy of self-delusion could be re-

garded as handsome. But nothing ever came of his speeches, and what he fought Mr. Goschen for the few members who remained to hear him never could make out.

Mr. E. S. Gordon, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, was very little known in the House at the time he took his seat on the Treasury Bench, but he was assured in advance of a favourable reception, if it were only for the fact that his acceptance of office was incompatible with the further appearance of Mr. Young. "So glad to hear a good account of your health and appearance from our Lord Advocate," wrote Mr. Gladstone to Dean Ramsay in a correspondence lately published. "A clever chiel, is he not?" Mr. Young was decidedly of the affirmative opinion, and made the most of the opportunities afforded by his position in the house to gain converts. Happily these opportunities were rare; and as Scotch business generally comes on about one o'clock in the morning, when only a score or so of members remain, the amount of human suffer-

ing endured consequent on Mr. Young's availing himself of them was much less than, under other circumstances, it might have been. But though Mr. Young was not a favourite speaker, he doubtless did valuable service to the Ministry, for the instinct of self-preservation is very strong, and it is difficult to imagine many points which men will not give up if the relinquishment of opposition guaranteed the reduction by half an hour's length of a speech from the ex-Lord Advocate. Mr. Gordon turns out to be a feebler man than Mr. Young, but he has, happily, clearer perceptions of his natural inability to weave around an audience the charm of eloquence. There was a certain cold-bloodedness about the manner in which Mr. Young was accustomed, after midnight, slowly to approach the table, deposit thereon a forbidding array of notes and papers, and deliberately commence a dreary harangue, as long as if the scanty audience were full of appreciative Saddletrees and he were the redoubtable Mr. Crossingloof. Mr. Gordon is much more

diffident, and after weakly and incomprehensibly floundering about in a case, presently withdraws, and the matter is settled by sheer voting power.

Joe Atlee, chatting with Lord Kilgobbin's son Dick about "the mighty intelligences that direct us," observes, "It is no exaggeration that I say if you were to be in the Home Office and I at the Foreign Office without our names being divulged, there is not a man or woman in England would be the wiser or the worse; though if either of us were to take charge of the engine on the Holyhead line there would be a smash or an explosion before we reached Rugby." Mr. Lever knew what he was writing about, and that he has not been led away from the truth by the lure of an epigram will appear if we reflect for a moment that Mr. Gathorne Hardy has succeeded Mr. Cardwell at the War Office, Mr. Ward Hunt supersedes Mr. Goschen at the Admiralty, Lord John Manners occupies Mr. Monsell's desk at the Post Office, and, as happened after that fearful bout of cursing on

the part of the Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Rheims, nobody seems one bit the worse—or the better either for the matter of that. Between the present and the past Postmaster-General there is, indeed, little to choose, for there exist no striking differences, except perhaps, that whilst Lord John Manners can, if asked why he should be Postmaster-General, state that his father is a duke and that his enjoyment of the Premier's personal friendship dates back over thirty years, Mr. Monsell, not possessing these advantages, would, had the question been addressed to him during his term of office, have been utterly nonplussed. But the great gulfs which are by personal characteristics fixed between Mr. Hardy and Mr. Hunt on the one hand, and Mr. Cardwell and Mr. Goschen on the other, are so wide that but for the existence of the principle which Mr. Joe Atlee illustrates, the War Office and the Admiralty would ere now be turned upside down.

In the matter of oratorical ability it is difficult to say whether the House has lost or gained

by the change. Mr. Cardwell was a hard, dry speaker, and had a melancholy, woe-begone manner with him, which, till the House grew accustomed to it in connection with statements relating to the business of the War Office, suggested that some great calamity had suddenly befallen the British army, and that when Mr. Cardwell's spirits had slightly recovered from the shock, details of the calamity should be forthcoming from his lips. But, withal, his statements would, if mankind could only bring themselves to pay attention to their lengthened utterance, be found to be luminous, and they invariably disclosed a comprehensive grasp of the subject and the appliance to dealings with it of sound common sense, unbiassed judgment, and great business capacity. Mr. Cardwell never aspired to eloquence, but just delivered himself of the business he had at heart, and was concerned rather that it should prosper than that he should shine. Mr. Gathorne Hardy, deceived by the cheers of the country party that never fail to echo his utterances, is

under the delusion that he is an eloquent man. There never was a more complete mistake. He has a great flow of words, and can pour them forth in intelligible sequence by the hour. But wordiness is not oratory—is even fatal to oratory—and Mr. Gathorne Hardy is excessively wordy. He has a good voice for a short speech, but in the absence of modulation it becomes wearisome at the end of the first half hour. He starts off at a gallop, and never draws rein till he is about to sit down, which he often does in a husky and breathless condition. He has some debating power, and uses it with the trained ability of a barrister. But for those who are not moved save by some flight of fancy, some arrow of wit, some lambent flame of passionate eloquence, Mr. Hardy's voice in debate is even as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Mr. Goschen is a speaker of the Cardwell school, though here the mournful manner is changed for a somewhat timid, anxious, half apologetical air. He has a curious trick when

addressing the House of holding himself by the lappets of the coat, as if otherwise he might run away and leave matters to explain themselves. Sometimes he changes the action and, apparently having the same object in view, holds himself firmly down by the hips. When not thus engaged he is nervously sorting the papers before him, or clawing at the air with the forefinger of his right hand. He has a peculiar voice, which does not gain additional charm from the prevalence of a tone suggestive of a perpetual cold in the head. Like Mr. Cardwell, his speeches read better than they sound, for he, too, has great business capacity, and possesses the power of marshalling intricate facts and figures in a manner that makes dark places clear.

Mr. Ward Hunt is remarkable as combining in his person two characteristics which rarely go together. He is a very big man and yet he is a scold. When in times past he rose to speak from the front Opposition Bench he invariably put his right hand,

knuckles downward, on the corner of the clerk's desk, and, standing chiefly on one leg, with his left arm akimbo, began to scold. Under a Conservative Government it comes to pass that the corner of the clerk's desk is on his left hand, and during the first few weeks of the Session the right hon. gentleman, whose ideas do not flow very rapidly, and who is consequently not quick at mastering a new situation, was curiously belated when he rose to speak. But the circumstance did not affect the tenour of his speech, which retained in full measure its former prevailing characteristic of "nagging." A cast of mind that permitted an ex-Cabinet Minister to become the exponent of back-stair gossip, and seriously to propound to the House of Commons the question "whether it was true that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the First Commissioner of Works were not on speaking terms," did not promise much for future manifestations of dignity; and the prospect has not brightened since Mr. Ward Hunt crossed over from the shady side of the

House. His first official speech administered a blow to the Government which would have destroyed a weaker one. That Mr. Ward Hunt, advanced to the First Lordship of the Admiralty, should immediately have commenced to scold his predecessors and bluster about "dummy ships," and "paper fleets," was precisely what those familiar with his character might have expected. But the country at large, not knowing what manner of man he was, was really alarmed at the prospect of a new plan of "Conservative reaction" in the form of greatly increased expenditure on the Navy, and a storm arose before which the First Lord of the Admiralty was obliged to bow, and confess that he "really did not mean anything." Once only since the Navy Estimates were disposed of has the right Hon. gentleman opened his mouth in debate, and once again he got his colleagues into trouble. The House was in Committee on the Licensing Act, and in the temporary absence of Mr. Cross, Mr. Ward Hunt rose and in reply to some remarks by an hon. baronet opposite,

assured the Committee that the Government were in favour of re-opening public-houses at six o'clock on Sunday evenings. As the Home Secretary had half an hour earlier declared for "seven" as the re-opening hour, the Committee were thrown into a state of consternation from which they were delivered only by Mr. Cross's coolly throwing his colleague over. This incident apparently closed the First Lord's career as an occasional mouthpiece of the Ministry, and his voice has not since been heard in the House of Commons save on rare occasions when a question has been put to him relating to the service of which he is the intelligent head. He has, however, abated not one jot of his attendance upon the Treasury Bench, where he has developed an ability for instantly falling asleep which, if observed by Mr. Pickwick's servitor the Fat Boy, would disturb his dreams with envy. During the long summer nights of the Session of 1874 there were few pictures more familiar in the House of Commons than that presented by the First Lord of the

Admiralty, his left arm stretched along the back of the Treasury Bench, his head gracefully inclining towards his left shoulder, and the great expanse of white waistcoat gently rising and falling to the cadence of repose. The destinies of the Church might tremble in the balance; national education might be wrestling for existence; Ireland might have found one new grievance; states might revolt and kingdoms be convulsed;—still the mighty Northampton squire slept on like a modern Bottom bewitched anew by Oberon.

Lord Sandon, who succeeds Mr. Forster in the Vice-Presidentship of the Council, was, during the Session of 1874, forced into a prominent position in which—setting aside his fatally injudicious speech on moving the second reading of the Endowed Schools Act Amendment Bill, for we do not know that he was not speaking according to his brief—he has acquitted himself well. Without pretensions to oratory, Lord Sandon is a clear speaker, is conciliatory in his manner, and is naturally

gifted with an earnestness of mien that stands him in good stead when pressing an argument. Mr. Forster is, as far as personal appearance goes, one of the notabilities of the House. He carefully cultivates ruggedness, and the soil being kindly the result must be held to be highly satisfactory. Mr. Disraeli, like the nymph in the Rape of the Lock,

> to the destruction of mankind
> Nourishes two locks,

which are oiled and carefully disposed in curls over his forehead. Possibly for the fuller accentuation of his opposition to the Conservative Chief, Mr. Forster does not nourish his hair at all, but lets it grow wild and arrange itself at its own will. His dress and manner are in keeping with his unkempt hair, and as he walks up the floor of the House with a rugged bunch of hair tumbling over his forehead, and one hand in the capacious side pocket of his squarely cut, loosely made coat, he looks as if he had been suddenly called up out of bed, and in

his haste had got into somebody else's clothes. When he does not attempt to be humorous or sarcastic he is an effective speaker; but the effect is not heightened by his manner. He has at best a harsh voice, which when he grows emphatic, as he is apt to do, grates painfully on the ear, and certain little mannerisms,—such as purposelessly assorting and re-assorting pieces of paper, moving about in a restless and irritating manner, and, above all, ceaselessly chuckling through whole sentences when making personal references to "my honourable" or "my right honourable friend opposite,"—place him far away from the school of speakers whom it is a pleasure to listen to.

The appointment of Mr. Lowther to an Under Secretaryship in the Colonial Office, the naming of Mr. Cavendish Bentinck as Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Trade, and the making of Sir James Elphinstone a Junior Lord of the Treasury, are three jokes which Mr. Disraeli has permitted to himself as tempering the gravity of official cares. I am not,

however, quite sure that the pitchforking into office of Mr. James Lowther has not, at bottom, other reasons than that suggested on the face of it. Mr. Disraeli specially prides himself, and with reason, upon his judgment of men, and is peculiarly prone to stretch forth his hand, take out of a crowd an unrecognised individual, and promote him to high office. It may be that he has seen in Mr. Lowther latent qualities which, with opportunity, may blossom into Ministerial greatness. Up to the end of the Session of 1873 the House had seen those qualities exercised only in the direction of interfering with the progress of Mr. Gladstone's plans for the disposition of business, and herein they were generally triumphant. Mr. Lowther's favourite hour for "catching the eye of the Speaker" was towards midnight, and after a Minister had for an hour or so been sedulously pouring oil on the troubled waters of a debate Mr. Lowther had a wicked way of dropping a lighted match by way of complement. As one of the players in the battledore-and-shuttlecock

game of moving alternately that the "House do now adjourn," and that "the debate be now adjourned," Mr. Lowther had no rival. Arriving fresh from the delights of dinner or the comforts of the club, it was a new joy to bait wearied Ministers, and at the same time feel that you were shielding the British Constitution from the fresh assaults of a reckless Minister. This was the work Mr. Lowther seemed to have appointed for his doing, and he did it well, there being in his manner a grave mocking earnestness that would have been enjoyable at an earlier and fresher hour of the night. All this is changed now, and the Treasury Bench finds room for no more sedate, attentive, respectful, respectable, and responsible personage than Her Majesty's Under Secretary of State for the Colonies. Like Prince Henry when called to the throne by the death of his father, Mr. Lowther has "turned away his former self," and it requires no great effort of imagination to conjure up the probable scene in which he bade farewell to his old

companions. The "Lord Chief Justice" is to be envied the opportunity of hearing Mr. Lowther say,

> The tide of blood in me
> Hath proudly flowed in vanity, till now.
> Now doth it turn and ebb back to the sea,
> Where it shall mingle with the state of floods
> And flow henceforth in formal majesty.

No such suspicion of coming greatness hangs about Sir James Elphinstone or Mr. Cavendish Bentinck. The joke of their appointment to office is not made dubious by the thought that possibly after all they may turn out to be Henry the Fifths. Mr. Cavendish Bentinck shared Mr. Lowther's peculiarity for manifesting himself at untimely hours of the night with the object of obstructing business, but his manner of accomplishing his desire was markedly different. Mr. Lowther often got the House to laugh with him; Mr. Cavendish Bentinck was always laughed at. He had one article of political faith, and it was expressed in the declaration that no good thing could come out of a Cabinet which had Mr. Gladstone for its chief. Just

as Mr. Newdegate always drags the Pope into his speeches, and as Mr. Dick invariably introduced the head of King Charles I. into his Memorial, so did Mr. Cavendish Bentinck refer to Mr. Gladstone's personal agency the passing difficulty of the moment. *Habitués* of the House of Commons during Mr. Gladstone's Ministry will be able to recall a series of midnight scenes in which Mr. Cavendish Bentinck appears in his well-known place at the first seat on the second bench below the gangway—flushed face, rumpled hair, white necktie, and a great display of shirt front. Below him sits his distinguished connection of the same name, who occasionally turns and whispers some fresh point against the guilty Gladstone. Behind, in the same line, is bluff Sir James Elphinstone, who, prodding him mercilessly in the small of the back to attract his attention, adds hints in the same direction. Between the two it is no wonder that Mr. Cavendish Bentinck sometimes lets drop unparliamentary remarks, which, amidst roars of

laughter, he presently retracts. One valuable quality, it must be admitted, he had, and it was the rare power to make Mr. Gladstone humorous. It often happened in the Sessions of 1870–3 that the honourable member for Whitehaven immediately preceded the leader of the House, and, if he had not in his remarks gone beyond the limits of human patience, Mr. Gladstone used to play with him as a kitten plays with a ball, rolling him over and over, and occasionally giving him a pretty smart rap, an exercise which no one enjoyed with more uproarious merriment than Mr. Cavendish Bentinck himself.

In the case of Sir James Elphinstone Mr. Disraeli's humour has made a special point. In the good old days when the Honourable East India Company flourished, Sir James commanded one of its ships, and was probably as good a skipper as ever sailed round the Cape of Good Hope. He looks every inch a sailor, and should politics ever fail and adversity overtake him he is assured of a competency

as long as the nautical drama draws a house. If he had nothing to do but walk across a stage that was arranged as a ship's deck it would be enough to invest the scene with a strong sense of realism. In familiar speech in the House of Commons he is known as "the Bo'sun," and his swaggering, cheery walk up the floor with his hat held firmly in his hand, as if it were a sou'wester in peril from a stiff breeze, is redolent of the quarter-deck. His speech, too, bewrayeth the sailor. He was in former times always ready with a few general remarks on "the cheeseparing Government;" but for choice he preferred to board them under the colours of the Union Jack. I think it was he who discovered that great and famous scandal about "old anchors." At any rate when found he made a note of it, and was never tired of casting the anchors at Mr. Childers and Mr. Goschen. Old ropes he was also strong upon, and yellow metal for ships' bottoms ever found in him an enlightened protector. He was invariably primed with

some mysterious information about the Government's doings in the dockyard, which he sometimes darkly hinted at in the form of a question blusteringly put to the First Lord of the Admiralty, but oftener embodied in a resolution to be moved on going into Committee of Supply. He was not often right; but that did not matter, as nobody minded what he said, and everybody rather liked the bluff old sailor, who seemed to bring into the enervating air of the House of Commons a whiff of salt sea breeze. If Sir James Elphinstone was to be made anything at all in the Conservative Government, it was reasonable to suppose that he would have been made a Junior Lord of the Admiralty. But Mr. Disraeli reserved the Junior Lordship of the Admiralty for Sir Massey Lopes, who is great on local burdens, and made a Junior Lord of the Treasury of Sir James Elphinstone, who knows exactly why the *Captain* went down, and where Her Majesty's dockyard would have been in another year had not a

merciful Providence removed the cocked hat of office from Mr. Goschen's head. It is all very well for Mr. Disraeli to have his joke, but it is the old story of the boys and the frogs over again. As a critical authority on naval matters Sir James Elphinstone is to us henceforth as Browning's "Lost Leader," who, "just for a handful of silver left us, just for a riband to stick in his coat."

> We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
> Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
> Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
> Made him our pattern to live and to die,

will do so no more. Possibly Sir James may presently get restless, and, giving up his £1,000 a year and his inglorious seat on the Treasury Bench, return, with telescope under his arm, to his old post on the watch-tower. But he will never more be "the Bo'sun" of old. Still like the "Lost Leader," his repentance, and return to a seat below the gangway, would bring only

> The glimmer of twilight,
> Never glad confident morning again.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INDEPENDENT MEMBER.

Pray use your freedom, and so far if it please you allow me mine to hear you, only not to be compelled to take your moral potions.

Massinger.

In a paragraph in one of his novels Mr. Disraeli "detects" and explains "the real cause of all the irregular and unsettled carriage of public men which so perplexed the nation after the passing of the Reform Act." The cause simply was that Earl Grey's Government, carried in upon a wave of popular enthusiasm, gained such an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons that "the legitimate Opposition was destroyed, and a moiety of the supporters of the Government had to discharge the duties of the

Opposition." "The general election of 1832," the distinguished novelist proceeds, "abrogated the Parliamentary Opposition of England which had practically existed for more than a century and half. And what a series of equivocal transactions and mortifying adventures did the withdrawal of this salutary restraint entail on the party which had so loudly congratulated themselves and the country that they were at length relieved from its odious repression!" If for the date given 1868 were substituted, no one prepared to make due allowance for a slight party bias could object to this passage were it applied by way of historical description to the epoch lying between the autumn of 1868 and the spring of 1874. Nor would the reflections with which Mr. Disraeli accompanies his statement have excited any remark by reason of incongruity had they been found embodied in a newspaper leading article published in March 1874, on the downfall of the Gladstone Ministry. "No Government can be long secure without a

formidable Opposition. It reduces their supporters to the tractable number which can be managed by the joint influences of fruition and hope. It offers vengeance to the discontented and distinction to the ambitious, and employs the energies of aspiring spirits who otherwise may prove traitors in a division or assassins in a debate."

With the overwhelming Parliamentary majority given to Earl Grey by the general election after passing of the Reform Act, his administration lasted just two years. Mr. Gladstone's majority in 1868 being only something over 100, he remained in power for upwards of five years. Mr. Disraeli's majority, as tested by the first party division of the new Parliament, is over sixty; time will show whether the curious theory here adumbrated will be carried out to its natural issue. But already it is clear that the tendency to self-destruction which large majorities carry with them is, in the new Parliament, weakened to the extent of the almost absolute extinction of

the party described in the last five lines of the quotation from 'Coningsby,' and which for brevity we call "The Independent Member." In the late Parliament the independent member exercised from his stronghold "below the gangway" an enormous influence, the more felt because no one could with certainty forecast the direction in which it would be exercised; and on more than one critical occasion he curbed the power of the strongest Ministry that has governed England in recent years. In the new Parliament the independent member has temporarily ceased to exist as a section, and even as an individual he is mightily subdued, and roars you as gently as a sucking dove.

The independent member has not in recent Parliaments flourished on the Tory side of the House, possibly because of the non-existence of the generating power of a large majority, probably because the atmosphere of the place is not kindly to the special sort of growth. There are at the present time on the right

hand of the Speaker three types of the independent member, and each type has but a single representative. Mr. Smollett, whose name will live in the record of the Session of 1874 much in the same way as the name of Eratostratus the Ephesian lives in history, has chiefly, in such manifestations as the House of Commons have been favoured with, shown himself "independent" of the trammels in which modern manners have entangled the Parliamentary debater. He so deeply reveres the memory of his great uncle that he conceives the literary style of 'Roderick Random' will, with a few unimportant alterations, suit a speech delivered in the House of Commons. This is, of course, a mistake; but it indicates the presence of an independent mind, and when Mr. Smollett made his famous speech in which he arraigned Mr. Gladstone as "a trickster," he formally avowed himself an independent member by throwing mud alike over the Ministerialists and the Opposition.

Of quite another type is Mr. Scourfield, who

delights to rank as an independent member, and has his little foible granted by an indulgent House which has watched for nearly a quarter of a century the snows of wintry age falling lightly on his head. Mr. Scourfield's great *forte* is anecdote and homely illustration, a good cue for a speaker when skilfully managed. But unhappily the House is not always able to detect the connection between Mr. Scourfield's stories and the subject matter, and the majority of them are, moreover, so ancient that there appear to be some grounds for the assertion which has been hazarded that they originally served to enliven the evening *réunions* of Noah's family during the voyage in the Ark. But old or new, *à propos* or irrelevant, if a story or an illustration occurs to the mind of Mr. Scourfield in the course of a debate, it is reason sufficient for him why it should be related to the House of Commons. There was once an old gentlemen who had a choice after-dinner story about a gun. He invariably brought the story in if an opening offered in

the course of conversation. If no such opening occurred, it was the old gentlemen's habit slyly to kick his foot against the table, and thereupon exclaim, "Hallo! was that a gun? No? Dear me, it was very like one. Talking about guns reminds me"—and then the story. Mr. Scourfield has not the delicate feeling of this old gentleman, and the tables of his hosts are safe from damage by kicks. When the honourable member gets up to speak, he promptly folds his arms across his chest, and thereafter, till he sits down, a constant struggle is going on, the arms restlessly battling to unfold themseves and get free, and Mr. Scourfield insisting upon their remaining to hear the anecdote out. Sometimes they do get clear away, but it is only for an instant, and again the House has before it the tall, white-headed figure, with restless arms folded and body swaying to and fro.

The third and last independent member on the Conservative side is Mr. George William Pierrepoint Bentinck, irreverently known in the

Tea Room as "Big Ben," to distinguish him from his connection, Mr. Cavendish Bentinck. Mr. Bentinck is, perhaps, the most exact type of the phenomenon. Mr. Smollett's independence is born, as has been hinted, of a too exclusive study of his great relative's literary style as exemplified in his novels. Mr. Scourfield is independent because he really is gifted with some sprinkling of the strong salt of common sense, and because if a man were a partisan he could tell pre-historic anecdotes bearing on one side of a question only, whereas, being an independent member, he can first lean to one side and then to the other as the gist of the story may go. It is Mr. Bentinck's special pride to describe himself as "a Tory," and his independence arises from the fact that the rest of his party have profited by their "education," some in larger, some in smaller degree, but all in a measure that has left him standing distinctly alone in the rear, the Ajax of Toryism, defying the lightning of increased knowledge and more widely spread intelligence. It adds

a touch of humour to the manifestations of Mr. Bentinck to know that he has, beyond all question, convinced himself that he has a mission to perform, and that it is really a serious matter for the country when, having decided what points he shall take up, he slowly rises and, in deep guttural voice, addresses the House. It is a charming fancy to picture Mr. Bentinck sitting down before books and papers (for doubtless he reads sometimes) and deliberately settling himself to form an independent opinion! He always, when speaking, carries in his hand a few slips of paper, to which he constantly refers as he proceeds. These must be his notes, and each underscored line will be "a point." Fancy Mr. Bentinck's mind discovering a point in an argument or a case, following it up and causing his hand to note it down! When the "points" come to be laid before the House they have generally dwindled to the infinitesimal, and not unfrequently are based upon an imaginary fact or a misunderstood statement. Mr. Bentinck has an impres-

sive way of focusing his ideas upon one leading point, at which he dully hammers, and on which he insists upon having a direct answer. "Now let the right hon. gentleman answer me that," he says. Oftener than otherwise the right hon. gentleman referred to takes no notice of Mr. Bentinck or his speech. But that does not grieve him. He has had his say. West Norfolk knows that he is on the alert, and if the nation neglects his warnings the nation's blood be upon its own head. During the Session of 1874 the hon. member discovered in himself a capacity for criticism on naval affairs, which at one time seemed likely to prove fatal to some of the older and, bodily, weaker officials of the House who were compelled to sit and listen to him. He was up on all possible occasions, and on some which were in advance fondly regarded as impossible. It was "our Reserve," or rather the absence of our Reserve which was at this epoch troubling the soul of Mr. Bentinck. "Where is your Reserve?" he asked, bending his beetling brows

and, out of old habit, addressing himself to Mr. Goschen. "Why, you have got no Reserve, and where will you be supposing a war breaks out to-morrow?" Sometimes a Minister or an ex-Minister deprecatingly placed a few facts at Mr. Bentinck's disposal in answer to his question, and the House thought the matter was settled. But, alas! on the first succeeding opportunity Mr. Bentinck presented himself with the same piece of paper in his left hand, the same beetling brows, and the same terrible inquiry, provokingly put as though it were being propounded for the first time—"Where's your Reserve? Why, you've got no Reserve, and where will you be supposing a war breaks out to-morrow?" In the preceeding Session Mr. Bentinck used to contribute to the hilarity of the House by the comic fierceness of his attacks upon Mr. Disraeli, and the provoking affectation of not hearing him which the Conservative leader was wont on such occasions to assume. Indeed at one time it was hard to say whom Mr. Bentinck more distrusted and disliked, Mr.

Gladstone or Mr. Disraeli. He thought the country safe in the hands of neither, and he played the patriot's part by denouncing both.

On the other side of the House the ranks of independent membership have lost two notable leaders in Mr. Henry James and Mr. Vernon Harcourt. The former is now "Sir Henry," and the latter has, with significant completeness, announced his utter putting off of the old Adam by dropping the compound surname with which the public were long familiar, and appearing in the Parliamentary reports disguised as "Sir William Harcourt." Both these hon. and learned gentlemen now take rank amongst ex-Ministers, but the sweets of office were to them but a Barmecide feast, and as in the House of Commons they have not appeared, even for a single day, as Ministers, they are best here dealt with in the review of the independent members. Of the two, though Mr. Henry James took precedence of Mr. Vernon Harcourt when the Premier whom they had both baited divided office between them, the

latter is, intellectually, by far the greater man. Sir Henry James is the sort of person to look upon in a great historic assembly when one desires fully to enter into and comprehend the feelings of the veteran Hotspur, when after the battle there came to him

> A certain lord, neat, trimly dressed
> Fresh as a bridegroom; and his chin, new reaped,
> Showed like a stubble land at harvest home.

We can, looking across at Sir Henry James sitting in the seat of Mr. Gladstone, understand how the grim soldier, regarding this "popinjay," was

> made mad
> To see him shine so brisk and smell so sweet,
> And talk so like a waiting gentlewoman
> Of guns and drums and wounds.

But withal, the ex-Attorney-General is a debater of fair ability and forensic style, sees a weak point in an argument with the trained quickness of a practising barrister, and brings to bear upon it with considerable effect a light field artillery, of which, whilst the guns are

not of heavy calibre, the barrels are certainly polished, and the harness is bright and natty. This is not Mr. James's own estimate of his character, and evidences of his holding one much higher appear with unfortunate conspicuousness in his manner in the House. There is a saying in Herefordshire, the county distinguished as that of Sir Henry James's birth, which modestly declares :—"What I know and what you don't know would, if put together, make a big book." Regarding Sir Henry James as he reclines upon the front Opposition Bench and loftily glances round at his fellow-members, it is impossible to resist the suspicion that he is repeating this formula to himself. He has characteristically selected the seat next to and just above that assigned by custom to the leader of the Opposition, and whenever he speaks he places himself in front of the brass-bound box, whereon of late Mr. Disraeli leaned when Mr. Gladstone sat opposite to him and led a great majority. This little weakness has induced an evil habit which greatly detracts

from the pleasure with which the House might otherwise listen to him. Placing a hand on either side of the box, he, the while he talks, advances and retires a pace with wearisome monotony, the effect of which is not improved by his holding down his head and looking at his boots when he has got the box at full arm's length. His style of address is strongly marked by the peculiarities acquired at the bar, and in particular he appears to be profoundly impressed with the moral effect of smiting desk or table with his hand by way of enforcing an argument. His voice, naturally an average good one, is spoiled in the delivery by a modulation that must have been learnt in a conventicle, and when the speaker is specially impressed with the importance of his observations his tones become almost funereal. At other times he speaks with a rapid utterance, and a peculiar see-saw emphasis that generally succeeds in bring into prominence the first syllable of every fifth word.

Sir W. Harcourt has the Parliamentary ad-

vantages of a commanding presence, a good voice, and very little practice at the bar. No one hearing him speak would guess that he is a lawyer, much less a Queen's Counsel. His gestures are few, and, though not eloquent, they are at least unobtrusive. He is a scholarly man and a wit, and there are cast about in the speeches he has delivered in the House as many "good things" as will be found in an equal number of average orations by far more celebrated speakers. The pity of it is that he has never succeeded in impressing the House with a belief in his sincerity. Rightly or wrongly, he has ever been regarded as a place-hunter, and when during the Ministerial crisis in the Session of 1873 he had made a damaging speech, Mr. Disraeli took all the sting out of it by slyly observing that he "did not know whether the House was yet to regard the observations of the hon. member for Oxford as carrying the weight of a Solicitor-General." In the same way some of his most epigrammatic sentences miss fire because, whilst they are put forth as being

impromptu, the House insists upon detecting about them the smell of the lamp. Another reason why his *bon mots* do not have the success their literary merit demands is that Sir W. Harcourt is so moved with his own humour that he indulges in an involuntary chuckle by way of preface, and after he has safely delivered his precious charge gets over an awkward pause that thereupon occurs by an unmusical noise like a prolonged A-a-a-a——. In a long speech he is apt to grow heavy—or perhaps only appears so from the fact that he is expected to be uniformly smart, and brevity is the soul of wit. It is a short, sharp attack, a lively diversion interposed in the jousts between the thunderous encounters of the Achilles and the Hector of debate that Mr. Vernon Harcourt has shone in times past, and in becoming "Sir William Harcourt" he adventurously abandoned the primitive but proved sling and stone for the cumbrous armour and the unaccustomed spear. For how short a time he wore these, and under what circum-

stances they were cast aside, is fully set forth in a subsequent chapter.

For strength of character, political integrity, inflexibility of purpose, and power in debate, Mr. Fawcett is the model independent member of the House of Commons. Elected in 1865, at a period when the nation seemed to be awakening to the desirability of having culture as well as cotton represented in Parliament, Mr. Fawcett, like John Stuart Mill, excited in the public mind a lively expectation of great things. He strove valiantly to justify this expectation by continually pronouncing an opinion upon all questions that cropped up in the House. At first he was received with the respect due to his literary reputation; but there is nothing the House of Commons gets tired of sooner than of one who is constantly presenting himself and offering his judgment on the question of the moment, whatever it may chance to be. If a man has made himself an authority on a given subject, he is invariably permitted to say his say there-

upon, however dreary may be his speech, and however inane his ideas. Even Mr. Macfie was once every year allowed to engross the best part of a night by discoursing upon the income tax, and Mr. Alderman McArthur's rising to deliver a lecture on the Fiji Islands was not resented otherwise than by a sigh of resignation. But the line must be drawn somewhere, and had Mr. Macfie set up as an authority upon Fiji, or had Mr. Alderman McArthur ventured to assert original dicta bearing upon the income tax, there is no doubt that the House of Commons would have howled them down. Mr. Fawcett laboured under the additional disadvantage of new membership. Nothing can exceed the courtesy with which a maiden speech is listened to in the House of Commons; but the new member, if he is wise, will refrain from letting his second appearance follow too closely on his first. A striking example of the danger that lurks under the tendency to infringe this rule was furnished in the Session of 1873 by the

case of Mr. Lewis. This gentleman made a really able maiden speech during the course of the debate on the Irish University Bill. It was a good deal talked about, and the consequence was that Mr. Lewis, unhappily becoming impressed with the idea that the eyes of the House were upon him whenever he crossed the bar, took to speaking in every debate, with the result that he was speedily voted a bore, and towards the end of the Session had utterly lost as fair a chance as falls to the lot of the average young member. Mr. Fawcett, being a far higher class man than Mr. Lewis, did not fall so soon; but fall he did, and his uprising in a debate invariably became the signal for that sustained cry of "'Vide, 'vide, 'vide, 'vide, 'vide!" that falls like a wet blanket upon an undesirable speaker.

But Mr. Fawcett is not a man who may be smothered in the folds of a wet blanket. I have seen him stand for fifteen minutes by the clock over the bar endeavouring to finish a sentence which the House protested it

would not hear. It happened during the debate on the Education Bill. The Ministry had coalesced with the Conservatives in the enterprise of passing a clause which was as wormwood and gall to hon. members below the gangway. Mr. Fawcett was declaiming in a strain of fervid eloquence against the spirit which, he said, had unaccountably taken possession of the Liberal Ministry. Mr. Lowe, in his customary trenchant style, had, earlier in the debate, protested against the unyielding hostility of the Irreconcilables, likening them to a herd of cattle which, having given to them a broad pasture whereon to browse, discovered in one corner a bed of nettles, and, forgetting the sweet pasture to be found elsewhere, stood bellowing their discontent around this little patch. "The right hon. gentleman has likened us to a herd of cattle," said Mr. Fawcett. "Let me remind him and the Ministry of which he is a distinguished member of the fate that befell another herd into which evil spirits had entered, and

which, running violently down a steep place into the sea, —" At this moment the House caught the bold allusion, and broke into a roar of laughter, cheers, and cries of "Divide!" Mr. Fawcett waited patiently till the storm appeared to have subsided, and then speaking in exactly the same tone, began again: "Which, running violently down a steep place —" Once more the roar drowned the speaker's voice, and Mr. Fawcett stopped, beginning again at exactly the same word when a lull in the storm seemed to offer an opportunity, being once more overpowered, only to start afresh when an opening presented itself. The contest raged for a quarter of an hour, but in the end Mr. Fawcett triumphed, and continuing at the word he had originally returned to, proceeded, "Which, running violently down a steep place into the sea, perished in the waters."

It was during the Session of 1873 that Mr. Fawcett suddenly found himself in the position of an acknowledged power in the House of

Commons. The accident of his having introduced a measure affecting Irish University Education, which the Government first of all pooh-poohed, having their own scheme in hand, and finally, after some rather ungracious treatment by Mr. Gladstone, were ultimately fain to adopt, raised Mr. Fawcett to something very like the altitude of an arbiter. What he would do with his Bill was at one time a very serious matter for the Ministry, and, to the surprise of many who had mistaken his firmness for obstinacy and his independence for recklessness, Mr. Fawcett conducted himself throughout the crisis with rare moderation and dignity, refraining from hampering the Ministry whilst their plan was before the House, and when it had failed and his own became a necessity displaying neither triumph nor temper. How far this new policy on the part of the member for Brighton had prevailed over the prejudices his earlier enthusiasm had excited against him was testified in a remarkable manner at a critical moment

when the Education Act Amendment Bill was being pressed forward by Mr. Forster. Mr. Fawcett took a characteristically bold course on the occasion by separating himself from the class represented by Mr. George Dixon, and declaring for the Government measure. The occasions are rare in Parliamentary history that a crowded House has been so absolutely swayed by the eloquence of a private member as it was on the night when Mr. Fawcett made clear his intentions in this matter. Mr. Bright has frequently had great oratorical triumphs, speaking from the bench behind that at which the sightless Professor stood. But the applause which Mr. Bright's eloquence was accustomed to call forth came chiefly from one side of the House, whereas Mr. Fawcett drew alternately and at will enthusiastic cheers alike from the Conservative as from the Liberal ranks. Mr. Gladstone himself was quite excited, leaning forward with hands clasped over his knees, watching the words as they fell from the

speaker's lips, whilst Mr. Forster lost no time in declaring that "amid the numerous very powerful speeches delivered by the hon. member for Brighton, this assuredly was the most moving." A great triumph this, remembering the quarter of an hour's struggle for a hearing two Sessions back!

Critically regarded Mr. Fawcett suffers much as a speaker from a habit of pitching his magnificent voice at too level a monotony of height, and "mouthing" his words when he desires to be specially emphatic. His addresses to Parliament are more of professorial exercitations than statesmanlike orations. He lacks the fancy and imagination which make the whole world the domain of the true orator and enable him to bring all its treasures to lay at the feet of his audience. Within the two years last past he has shown signs of the disenthralment of his mind from the trammels of sectarianism, and in proportion to his progress in this direction has been his advance in the estimation of the House of

Commons. There will always be much of the Puritan about him; but of late the manifestations of this spirit have been tempered by a fuller measure of charity, and he has tacitly admitted that those who differ from him on matters of opinion are not therefore necessarily predestined to perpetual residence in the place where the worm dieth not and the fire is never quenched. Having once gained the respectful attention of the House, and having, it is to be hoped, finally overcome the evil habit of making his counsel too cheap by continually proffering it on miscellaneous topics, there are no bounds to the possible heights he might reach in the State if his acceptance of office were conceivable. With Mr. Bright in the Cabinet, and Saul among the prophets, all things in this direction are possible, though the human mind is slow to accustom itself to the idea of Mr. Fawcett sitting on the Treasury Bench.

The new adjustment of the balance of parties has had the effect of causing Mr. George

Dixon to retire into comparative oblivion, though there are signs abroad that the retirement is only temporary. In other days Mr. Dixon was generally listened to with attention, being acknowledged as the spokesman of what in the last Parliament had come to be regarded as an influential party; but to follow his speech was a duty rather than a pleasure. He has a hard, dry, bald style; speaks in unmusical tones; and if one did not hear his voice or see his lips move, he would get no indication from his face that he was addressing a large assembly. The House laughs, reasonably enough, when Mr. Synan shouts till he is red in the face, and conducts himself generally in a manner that might, and would but for the odd gleam of good-humour that persistently lurks in the corners of his mouth, terrify nervous members with the apprehension that presently one of them was to be eaten. But none the less does it dislike to have the sensation creeping over it that it is being addressed by a wooden figure-head from a ship's bows.

There is a happy medium in this sort of thing, and it lies somewhere between the style of Mr. Synan and that of Mr. Dixon.

Mr. Mundella fortunately has not been discomposed by finding himself *vis-à-vis* a strong Ministry. He is as ready as ever to proffer advice in critical moments, and to bestow upon the House of Commons the value of the experience gained by him during his memorable fortnight's visit to Germany and Switzerland. No one can say—probably because no one dare venture to sit down before the problem—how we managed to get on at all before Mr. Mundella went that journey. But if since his return matters have not mended, it is not for lack of counsel on the part of the honourable member for Sheffield. Mr. Mundella never makes a short speech, and neither his manner nor his matter renders a long one endurable. It is a curious contradiction of nature that a professed humanitarian who has made such great efforts in the direction of shortening the hours of labour in factories

should himself unrelentingly talk to the hapless House of Commons for two hours and a half at a stretch. It does not seem fitting that, in this respect, there should continue to be one law for the factory owner and another for the hon. member for Sheffield.

It is a pleasant change when, from the seat below, Sir Wilfrid Lawson rises to discourse on the evils of the liquor traffic or the iniquity of war. "The hon. and amusing baronet," as Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen, himself never guilty of being amusing, peevishly called him, has done what few men have accomplished. He has thrown an air of geniality over teetotalism, and has made "a man with a mission" a welcome interloper in debate in the House of Commons. As a rule Parliament votes men with missions impracticable bores, and will not listen to them. But it is always ready to hear Sir Wilfrid Lawson, and is rarely disappointed in its expectation of being interested and amused. He is neither an eloquent man nor a startlingly original

thinker. But he has a way of seizing a commonplace idea, dressing it up in some incongruous fashion, and suddenly producing it for the consideration of the House of Commons. Thousands of sermons have been preached, thousands of verses written, on the empty glories of war. Timotheus placed on high amid the tuneful choir at Alexander's Feast did not omit the theme.

> War, he sung, is toil and trouble,
> Honour but an empty bubble,
> Never ending, still beginning,
> Fighting still and still destroying.

This is a celebrated verse, but it does not bring home to men's minds the underlying fact to the same extent as this desirable object was obtained by Sir Wilfrid Lawson when, a few nights after both Houses of Parliament had voted their thanks to Sir Garnet Wolseley and his troops, he incidentally summed up the practical results of the expedition as being comprised in Great Britain's having gained possession of "a Treaty and an old umbrella." "No Treaty!" shouted out an hon. member

anxious for the truth. "Well, never mind," said Sir Wilfrid; "it doesn't much matter, for I don't suppose the Treaty would be worth any more than the umbrella." The hon. baronet's style of speaking is well suited to his humour, and greatly adds to its effect. He does not, like Mr. Mundella, "make a speech" to the House. He just has a chat with it, and being a man of sense and humour, he is a thoroughly enjoyable companion.

Mr. Anderson, who occasionally proclaims his independence otherwise than by sitting below the gangway, speaks with a curious drawl which force of long associations has in imaginative minds oddly connected with the necessity for improvements in the Currency. The member for Glasgow holds strong convictions on the currency question, and amongst the things which young members early learn to avoid is his annual speech on "calling attention" thereto. But this arises simply from the unattractiveness of the subject and the natural antipathy which hope-

less motions annually brought forward in the House of Commons awaken in the human breast. On ordinary topics Mr. Anderson is a clear thinker and an able speaker, and regarding matters strictly from the point of view of intrinsic merit, often throws over party questions an air of originality. He has, moreover, a good deal of dry humour, and is above all a fearless, sturdy, Cromwellian man, not to be turned aside from the path of what he holds to be his duty by any considerations of the consequences of giving offence in high quarters. His conduct in the Lord Sandhurst affair, in the Session of 1874, was unexceptionally good, and it is difficult to say wherein he most compelled the admiration of the House—the fearlessness with which he set himself to root out a wrong, the tenacity with which he followed up his purpose, the able manner in which he drew up the indictment, or the self-restraint and good taste with which he acquitted himself of a delicate and disagreeable task.

Among modest, unassuming independent members who very rarely speak, but who, when they do, have something to say that is worth listening to, are Mr. Holms and Mr. Watkin Williams. The former alway prepares his speeches with infinite painstaking, generally selecting a subject involving great interests and much minutiæ—such, for example, as British rule on the Gold Coast, on which he delivered a weighty speech in the Session of 1874; or the question of Civil Service Expenditure, on which, by the sheer force of argument and illustration, he obtained the Ministerial consent to the appointment of a Royal Commission. Mr. Holms is altogether of the opinion set forth in 'Armgart,' that

> Life is not rounded in an epigram,
> And saying aught we leave a word unsaid.

It is highly probable, when he has sat down after a speech extending over a couple of hours or more, the House, if polled, would triumphantly acquit him of having left a word unsaid, and might even take the opportunity of hinting

that if he were briefer in his exposition he might gain more of the desired effect. But we must not look for perfection, and if Mr. Holms were as witty as Sir W. Harcourt he might be as superficial. He is the sort of man that would please the eminent authority who, in reply to an invitation to lecture in the city where Mr. Holms has his place of business, recently lifted up his voice against "your modern fire-working, smooth-downy-curry-and-strawberry-ice and milk-punch altogether lecture," as being "an entirely pestilent and abominable vanity." Mr. Watkin Williams never makes long speeches, and never speaks for the mere sake of talking. He has the reputation of being one of the soundest lawyers in the House. When in 1873 it was repeatedly stated that Mr. Williams was to succeed Mr. Jessel in the Solicitor-Generalship, people were first surprised and then pleased. He had taken so little share in party warfare, and had so modestly remained in the background, that his name did not come trippingly on the tongue as

a claimant for place. But being mentioned, and the primitive notion of making a man a Solicitor-General because he had a supreme knowledge of the law temporarily reviving, the proposed appointment was very popular. No one was surprised, however, when the rumour was falsified by the event and Mr. Gladstone selected as junior law officer of the Crown the showier and more shallow member for Taunton.

Sir Charles Dilke does not owe any of the Parliamentary fame he may possess to the manifestation of gifts of oratory. The hon. baronet is, to tell the truth, a very wearisome speaker, and if he had not, as a rule, something to say that was worth listening to, he would never find an audience. If in any future edition of Mr. Robert Montgomery's poems a metaphorical illustration were required for the famous stream that

> Meandered level with its fount,

the publisher could not do better than procure a

carte-de-visite portrait of the hon. member for Chelsea as he appears when addressing the House of Commons. Sir Charles usually sits on the second or third seat on the front bench below the gangway, but when he rises to make a set speech he invariably stands partly in the gangway itself with his back turned to his personal friends. The note upon which he begins his oration is marvellously preserved throughout its full length, and as he monotonously turns his body from left to right, as if he were fixed on a pivot, the impression he leaves on the mind of the beholder is that the reservoir of his speech is ingeniously located in his boots, and that he is pumping it up. For an hour at a time the level stream, unrelieved by a single coruscation of wit, imagination, fancy, or humour, flows out upon the House of Commons. But the House, nevertheless, attentively listens, as far as human endurance can withstand the more than mortal monotony, for Sir Charles Dilke generally has something notable to say, and he has a fearless way of saying it which,

to those who have souls capable of being stirred by the fire of political knight-errantry, covers a multitude of sins of manner.

Mr. Horsman was a Lord of the Treasury before Sir Charles Dilke was born, and to-day sits on the bench behind him, an independent member. Perhaps, with the exception of that of Mr. Roebuck, the Parliamentary career of Mr. Horsman is the most interesting, and, in some respects, the saddest, which occurs to one looking round the faces of the crowded benches of the House of Commons. He has always been a lonely man, sitting apart from his fellows, and, on five days out of the week, scowling upon them. His political friendships, made at rare intervals, have invariably been of brief duration, and generally have had for *raison d'être* an imagined necessity for attacking some one. Thus, during the Austro-Prussian War, Mr. Horsman's sympathies being stirred for Austria, he found a congenial companion in Mr. Kinglake, and for some weeks the two were inseparable. A more widely-known

friendship was that struck up between Mr. Horsman and Mr. Lowe at the epoch of the great Reform Bill debates, the union Mr. Bright immortalised by likening "the party" to a Scotch terrier, of which no one could determine between the two extremities which was the head and which the tail. When, now nearly forty years ago, Mr. Horsman first entered Parliament, he seemed to have set his heart upon gaining a high place in Government, and in 1840 took office as Lord of the Treasury in the Administration of Viscount Melbourne. He went out with the Ministry when Peel returned to power in 1841, appearing again on the Treasury Bench in 1855 as Chief Secretary for Ireland. This office he resigned in June, 1857, for the singular reason that he "had not work enough to do." Since then he has been a sort of Vicar of Bray in the ranks of the Opposition—whatever Ministry has held the Treasury Bench, and on whichever side of the House he has himself

sat, Mr Horsman has preserved intact his self-assumed office of hostile critic.

In this way of enjoying life Mr. Horsman has, as may be easily understood, found no further lack of work to do. A "superior person," regarding public events from lofty heights fenced about by no personal friendships and no party ties, need have no idle moments for his bitter tongue. Nor can the accusation of idleness lie against Mr. Horsman. In his enlightened speeches against the French Commercial Treaty; in his denunciations of the abolition of the tax on paper; in his promulgation, in the teeth of the House of Commons, and in spite of the British Constitution, of the doctrine that in dealing with money Bills the House of Lords have equal rights with the representatives of the people; in his fierce assaults on Prussia; in his insinuations against France; in his tirades against Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright; in his personal attack on Mr. Walter in connection with that gentleman's management of his private property and the disposal of his evening hours;

and in his invective against the late Emperor of the French, who "jockeyed his own subjects out of their liberty," Mr. Horsman has found from time to time full employment of a kind more congenial than that of assisting Taper and Tadpole at the Treasury, or of endeavouring to do justice to Ireland. As a speaker Mr. Horsman's style savours a good deal of the Union Debating Society. There is a steady pendulum swing about his sentences which irritates the familiar listener with the consciousness that having heard the first portion he knows beforehand how they will finish. Sydney Smith satirised the undue tendency to antithesis on the part of Dr. Parr by a passage in which he supposes the doctor observing of some persons that "they have profundity without obscurity, perspicuity without prolixity, ornament without glare, terseness without barrenness, penetration without subtlety, comprehensiveness without digression, and a great number of other things without a great number of other things." Mr. Horsman differs from "the learned

critic and eminent divine" (whom there is too much reason to fear the multitude of the present day confound with the purveyor of pills), inasmuch that his proneness to the lavish use of antithesis is shown in the construction of his sentences as a whole rather than in the contrasting of isolated words. There is a curious expression about Mr. Horsman's face which consorts well with the general tenour of his Parliamentary addresses. Somebody—I think it is the author of 'Rab and his Friends'—has said of a dog that it bore upon its face an expression of inquiring interest, as if life were for it a very serious thing. Mr. Horsman, when he is putting a question to Mr. Disraeli, has upon his face exactly the look which is here referred to, and which any one can see for himself by approaching an unfamiliar bull-terrier left in charge of the garden entrance to a house—a look of anxious, doubtful, half-surly inquiry, which may be the prelude either to a savage growl or to an intimation that you may advance, according as the scrutiny proves satis-

factory or otherwise. Mr. Horsman's influence upon a debate has greatly lessened in recent Sessions, but he is still a power in the House, and will probably before Parliament is prorogued have something soothing to say about his ancient adversary the present Premier.

Sitting in the corner seat of the front bench below the gangway on the Opposition side is a man so old and feeble looking that the stranger wonders what he does here. His white hair falls about a beardless face which is comparatively fresh looking, though the eyes lack lustre and the mouth is drawn in. When he rises to speak he bends his short stature over a supporting stick, and as he walks down to the table to hand in the perpetual notice of motion or of question, he drags across the floor his leaden feet in a painful way that sometimes suggests to well-meaning members the proffer of an arm, or of service to accomplish the errand—advances which are curtly repelled, for this is Mr. Roebuck, the "Dog Tear'em" of old, toothless now, and dim of sight, but still

high in spirit, and ready to fight with, or to snarl and snap at, the unwary passer-by. It is said in tea-room conversation that Mr. Roebuck has changed his political opinions oftener than any other man in the present House. Perhaps the allegation, whilst made in good faith, is unconsciously exaggerated, because Mr. Roebuck, on which ever side he has ranged himself, has always been in the van of opinion, and has prominently figured as its exponent, and consequently his facings about occupy a larger space in the memory than those of other men. There was a time when he was a thorough-paced Radical, a friend of Mr. Stuart Mill and Sir William Molesworth. He has twice graduated as a Tory, with some bewildering counter marches and strategic movements which have finally landed him in the political position he holds to-day, and which is best and most safely described as that of Mr. Roebuck, the member for Sheffield. In one of his papers in the 'Spectator,' Addison, referring to the contemporary fashion amongst

ladies of wearing patches stuck on one side or other of their faces according as they were Whig or Tory, says:—"I must here take notice that Rosalinda, a famous Whig partisan, has, most unfortunately, a very beautiful mole on the Tory part of her forehead, which being very conspicuous has occasioned many mistakes and given a handle to her enemies to misrepresent her face as though it had revolted from the Whig interest." Mr. Roebuck is, with a difference, in the same unfortunate predicament as the lady here referred to. He has a Tory mole on the Whig part of his forehead, and during his political career he has undergone much obloquy as a consequence of the numerous mistakes which have therefrom arisen.

Mr. Roebuck is a good lover and a good hater, chiefly the latter. A Parliamentary Ishmael, his hand has been against every one and every one's hand against him. Lord Palmerston, Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden—in brief, every man of any pro-

minence in the House of Commons during the past quarter of a century, has at one time or another felt the fangs of "Tear'em." The poor wit and coarse humour of Bernal Osborne were no match for the keen and poisoned darts shot forth from Mr. Roebuck's tongue. Mr. Bethel, since known as Lord Westbury, was perhaps the only man in the House in the days when there were giants who could beat him at his own weapons. The present Mr. Justice Keogh sometimes threw himself into the breach, and once even silenced the terrible talker for a whole night by a quotation from 'Macbeth.' The House was in Committee, and Mr. Roebuck had been up three times with objections and aspersions. When Mr. Keogh rose he quietly opened his remarks by observing—

Thrice the brindled cat hath mewed.

Mr. Roebuck's persistent attacks upon the late Emperor of the French will not be forgotten by the present generation, who will

also call to mind the sudden change that came over the hon. member's opinion of his Majesty at a later epoch of the Empire. In 1854 Mr. Roebuck, speaking in his place in the House of Commons, protested against the Queen of England's advancing to be kissed by "the perjured lips of Louis Napoleon." Seven years later he went over to Paris to entreat the Emperor to interfere in the American Civil War in behalf of the Confederate States, and on his return Napoleon III. had in England no warmer adherent or more respectful friend.

Mr. Ward Hunt is useful in contrast with Mr. Roebuck, as illustrating the difference between an ill-tempered man of suspicious mind and only average intellectual power, and one of the same temperament but gifted with high ability. Mr. Ward Hunt is undignified in his anger, and, what is worse, he is sometimes, as Mr. Goschen was fain to declare before the House of Commons, "not fair in his statements—is scarcely ingenuous." For

lack of ability to conceive arguments he indulges in invective, and in order to support a theory he will paraphrase a statement of fact. He is like "the geographers" described by Swift, who

> in Afric maps
> With savage pictures fill their gaps;
> And o'er unhabitable downs
> Place elephants for want of towns.

Mr. Roebuck is able to dispense with such devices; and whilst he is ready enough to imagine evil things of his political adversaries, he is content to take their words as actually uttered and their actions as reputably reported, and of these make scorpions for their backs. In argument his style is clear and incisive, and he is a master of good, simple English, which he marshals in short, crisp sentences. His voice, now so low that it scarcely reaches the Speaker's chair, was once full and clear. As in his best days he never attempted to rise to anything approaching florid eloquence, so he rarely varied in gesture from a regularly recurring darting of the index finger at the hon.

member whom he chanced to be attacking—an angry, dictatorial gesture, which Mr. Disraeli, after smarting under it for an hour, once said reminded him of "the tyrant of a twopenny theatre." Now when Mr. Roebuck speaks his hands are quietly folded before him, and only at rare intervals does the right hand go forth with pointed finger to trace on the memories of the old men of the House recollections of fierce fights in which some partook who now live only as names in history.

CHAPTER V.

THE TALKER.

Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them they are not worth the search.

The Merchant of Venice.

Had this series of papers been written a year earlier the present chapter would, in all probability, have proved the most comprehensive of the eight. In the late Parliament "the Talker" was by far the most prominent and the most largely represented individual type in the House of Commons. This was owing in a great measure, as has been hinted, to the force of the example set by the Leader. Mr. Gladstone not only talked frequently himself but

was the cause of frequent talking in others. Mr. Disraeli, on the contrary, never speaks when a speech can be dispensed with, and his personal influence is so paramount that whilst some of his official colleagues were known in the late Parliament as amongst the most wearisome Talkers in the House, they are now notable for the brevity with which they make explanations, answer questions, or urge arguments. Another and more obvious cause is the weeding out which took place at the General Election. The issue of the various contests cost the House the presence, amongst others, of Mr. Rylands, Mr. Bouverie, Mr. Bernal Osborne, Lord Bury, Mr. R. N. Fowler, Mr. W. Fowler, Dr. Brewer, and Mr. Hinde Palmer, gentlemen who were accustomed to fill up many hours in debate to their own supreme satisfaction, and to the casting of a glow of delight over their respective family circles.

But Horace testifies that

> Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona
> Multi :

and there have been some since. The House of Commons still has its Talkers, and as long as Sir George Balfour, Mr. Melly, Sir Eardley Wilmot, Mr. Charley, Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, Mr. Charles Lewis, and Sir George Jenkinson are spared to it, repining would be unpardonable.

Sir George Balfour is, comparatively, a young member, having obtained his seat for Kincardineshire in time to sit throughout the Session of 1873. But he has made the most of his opportunities, and 'Hansard' records under his name a collection of speeches in view of which one does not know whether to wonder more at the largeness of the number or the diversity of the topics treated. The gallant knight's description of his political views communicated to the compiler of 'Dod' covers only a small tract of the ground his mind dominates. To be "in favour of the abolition of the law of hypothec in Scotland, of the removal of hares and rabbits from the class of game, and of tenants being guaranteed

the value of unexhausted improvements," is a good deal for a single human mind to grasp. But these are mere indications of odd sections of the range of Sir George Balfour's mind, and give no nearer approximation to an idea of his wealth of opinion than do the little bags of grain the corn factor carries about with him enable one to form an adequate idea of the vast extent of the fields wherefrom the harvest was reaped. Like Dr. Johnson's Observation, Sir George is, at a moment's notice, prepared "with extensive view" to

Survey mankind from China to Peru.

If, however, one having such universal knowledge can be suspected of a geographical preference it is for India, where Sir George won his knightly spurs and over the affairs of which he keeps a watchful eye in Parliament. But albeit such a constant speaker, speaking evidently does not come to him, as reading and writing came to Dogberry, by nature. Obviously the reverse is the fact. There is cir-

cumstantial evidence of his having studied and adopted Lord Chesterfield's advice to his son when that promising young man was about to enter Parliament. "Fix these three truths strongly in your mind," says the noble Letter Writer, himself a distinguished Parliamentary orator: "First, that it is absolutely necessary for you to speak in Parliament; secondly, that it only requires a little human attention and no supernatural gifts; and thirdly, that you have all the reason in the world to think that you shall speak well." Sir George Balfour, having set this or some similar scheme before him, has hitherto relentlessly and manfully carried it out; but he has not, as Lord Chesterfield in the letter quoted from confidently promised his correspondent should be the case, thereby overcome that feeling of "awe" which the House of Commons inspires in the unaccustomed speaker. For some time before he rises to speak in a debate he moves about in his seat as if he were suffering acute physical pain. When he has screwed his

courage up to the point of rising he hastily, and, as it appears, gratefully, sits down again upon the slightest evidence of some other candidate having been selected by the Speaker. But with a dogged courage that would be admirable in another cause he refuses to permit himself to take advantage of the openings which the House gladly enough affords him of evading the necessity of speaking, and generally dashes in desperately before the debate is concluded. When actually speaking his face wears a sad, weary, beseeching, pain-enduring expression very curious to behold, and its effect is heightened by an uneasy, restless way of turning about to regard his audience in sections, and by the thin, highly pitched tone of voice in which his words find rapid utterance. Mr. Lusk, now Sir Andrew, used to enliven the midnight watches of the House with singular tones of voice; but when the right hon. gentleman is relieved of the cares of Lord Mayoralty and returns to watch the estimates through committee he will find in

this sort of pre-eminence a dangerous rival in Sir George Balfour.

Mr. Melly is a Talker of a type widely differing from the hon. and gallant member for Kincardineshire. Sir George Balfour is in mental temperament akin to Mr. Crabbe, the glazier of Middlemarch, who, we are told, "gathered much news and groped among it dimly." Mr. Melly, whatever may be the intrinsic worth of his news, is at least free from the reproach of groping among it dimly. His fault lies rather on the other side, and it is dogmatism that is responsible for his unpopularity in the House. Really a hard-working, intelligent, useful member, Mr. Melly is always impatiently listened to, even when, as in the case of legislation on the Licensing Act of 1874, he was the first to assert a position which the House eventually adopted as its own. This is a hard lot, but it triumphantly vindicates the potency of manner; and possibly when Mr. Melly affords evidence that he has learned to think a little less of himself he will

find the House thinking a little more of him. At present he is one of an obnoxious class which counts, among other members, Mr. Charley and Mr. Charles Lewis. Mr. Charley, it must be admitted, has vastly toned down since he first entered Parliament, now five years ago. At the outset he was simply irrepressible, and when he rose to speak for the third time in a sitting was hooted down even by his own party, who are marvellously tolerant of bores if they only vote straight. When he was not speaking he was pervading the lobby, or was seen from afar up in the precincts of the Press Gallery with verbatim reports of his last speech as he had intended to deliver it, and which he vainly hoped might be accepted for full publication in the journals of the following morning. A busy, fussy, self-asserting man, whom Salford, if it would not be denied its preference, had better have made its Town Clerk or its Chief Constable than its member of Parliament.

Mr. Lewis has more brains than Mr. Melly,

and much more than Mr. Charley. He is a fair speaker—in fact, as already incidentally noted, he delivered one of the best speeches which appear in the record of the debate in 1873 on the Irish University Bill. But his progress has been imperilled by the *soupçon* of the manner of a police-court attorney, and by a tendency to thrust his unasked counsel on the House. It was characteristic of him that he, a new member, should in the Session of 1874 have brought forward a motion ostensibly designed to maintain intact the purity of the House of Commons by opposing the issue of a new writ for Stroud till the character of the borough had been considered and declared free from taint. There is a homely saying to the effect that you must have known a man seven years before you presume, uninvited, to poke his parlour fire. Young members of the House of Commons will have mastered one great secret—if not of success, at least of avoidance of failure—when they become possessed with the conviction that the House

will not brook a lecture or advice from a member whose face and figure are not so familiar that they seem to have become as much a portion of the chamber as the clock over the gangway or the canopy over the Speaker's chair. Whether the advice be sound or empty, the counsellor eminent or obscure, does not matter. Mr. John Stuart Mill and Mr. Fawcett when they first entered Parliament fell into the besetting sin of young members, and their repulse was scarcely less rudely complete than that which in the Session of 1874 covered Mr. Jenkins with confusion. A man may do or say pretty much as he pleases in the House of Commons when he has become "free of the place;" but till time has accomplished that for him, it were well for him to be cautious in his attempts to attract notice.

Most of the Talkers of the House have some speciality which like Melancholy in respect of the unknown youth, they have "marked for their own." Thus, Sir George Jenkinson has

taken turnpike roads under his especial care, and makes long and tedious excursions down them whenever opportunity offers. No one can deny that we could not do without our turnpikes; but regarded as a subject of frequent conversation they are not attractive, and as Sir George Jenkinson endows their discussion with no extraneous graces of oratory, the House flees as one man when the hon. baronet rises, with spectacles on his nose and a portentous bundle of papers in his hand. Mr. Osborne Morgan has charge of the burial of Dissenters, and possibly the topic is responsible for the peculiar manner of his speech His voice rises and falls with that distressing cadence which is now, with happily lessened frequency, sometimes heard from the pulpit; and one listening to him from the Strangers' Gallery might well think he had come to bury the House of Commons, not to convince it. The contraction of this evil habit is the more to be deplored, inasmuch as Mr. Osborne Morgan is often in the matter of his speech an

effective debater. His oration in the Session of 1873 on moving the second reading of the Burials Bill was exceedingly clever and occasionally brilliant, and if it had been delivered by Mr. Disraeli would have made a great sensation. But there is something irresistibly ludicrous in his voice and manner, and when he would be most impressive he is most comical. In Carlyle's 'Life of John Sterling,' there is a curiously exact description of Mr. Osborne Morgan addressing the House of Commons. It originally refers to Sterling reading aloud his poem of the 'Sexton's Daughter,' and runs thus :—"A dreary pulpit or even conventicle manner; that flattest moaning hoo-hoo of predetermined pathos, with a kind of rocking canter introduced by way of intonation, each stanza the exact fellow of the other, and the dull swing of the rocking-horse duly in each."

Mr. Beresford Hope, who looks after the interests of High Art and High Church, has a voice of the peculiarities of which an adequate

impression could be given only by the introduction here of a musical stave fantastically scored. In making use of such a simple and recurrent phrase as, for example, "My hon. friend on the other side of the House," Mr. Beresford Hope goes through a series of the most extraordinary vocal contortions ever heard. When he speaks he literally "collars" himself, seizing with either hand his coat collar as nearly as possible below his ears, and in this curious attitude slowly, as he talks, turns his short, thick-set figure from side to side—"the embodiment of Batavian grace," as Mr. Disraeli, in one of his happiest phrases, once called him. It is not necessary to add that Mr. Beresford Hope is not a pleasant Talker, but his speeches are always worth reading, being lightened up by witty, epigrammatic sentences and by the great grace of culture. His discourse is, moreover, strongly spiced with personalities, and breathes throughout a delicious breath of pity for the common herd whose views on the Correggiosity of Correggio

differ from his own. Like Bramston's 'Man of Taste,' Mr. Beresford Hope usually winds up his remarks with an intimation that

> This is true taste; and whoso likes it not
> Is blockhead, coxcomb, puppy, fool, and sot.

Only, of course, the member for Cambridge University uses nicer language than the lively clergyman whom Dodsley rescued from oblivion.

Thirty-four years ago Mr. Beresford Hope was a famous declaimer. He carried off the prizes which Trinity College, Cambridge, offered both for Latin and for English declamation; and probably this early success is responsible for the fatal faultiness of his manner to-day. Leaving college with a high reputation as a declaimer, he has gradually and unconsciously exaggerated the little tricks of voice and manner which comprise school declamation till they have grown into monstrosities and are no more removable at the will of the unfortunate prizeman than was the Old Man of the Sea whom, "with a light

heart," Sinbad the Sailor hoisted on his shoulders. Something of the growth of evil habit in this direction may be seen in actual progress in the case of Colonel Barttelot. So recently as the commencement of the Session of 1873, the member for West Sussex was, for an ex-captain of dragoons, a very fair speaker. As an exponent of the views of country gentlemen of a certain range of intelligence and possessing a given number of votes he was listened to with attention. But this moderate measure of success turned his head. There is too much reason to fear that whilst other members of Parliament were taking advantage of the recess to recruit their wasted energies, Colonel Barttelot, scorning delights, was living laborious days in the companionship of one of those professors of elocution whose advertisements occasionally appear in the newspapers. However it be, it is certain that when the honourable and gallant member returned to Parliament in 1874, the tendency to "impressiveness" of speech,

the growth of which had towards the close of last Session alarmed his best friends, had developed itself in a singular degree of perfection. To-day Colonel Barttelot is, perhaps, one of the most impressive speakers in the House of Commons, and it is a pity he has so little to say that is worth hearing. He chops his sentences up into regular spaces, advancing from section to section with solemn cadence and provoking deliberation, presenting a spectacle painful for the beholding of kind-hearted persons who have read Æsop's Fables and remember the fate that befell the frog who tried to swell himself out to the dimensions of an ox.

If Mr. Henley had no other claim to notability in the ranks of members of the House of Commons, he would have that which pertains to one who has with his own eyes witnessed the occurrence of events which are matters of history to the present generation. Born in the eventful year when "President Verginaud with a voice full of sorrow had to say, 'I

declare in the name of the Convention that the punishment it pronounces on Louis Capet is that of death,' " Mr. Henley took his degree at Oxford in the year when Waterloo brought back the Monarchy to France, and entered Parliament with the tide of Conservative reaction which, in 1841, landed Sir Robert Peel high and dry on the Treasury Bench. He was thus in the later prime of life when he first entered the House of Commons, and was getting old when, nearly a quarter of a century ago, he was Vice-President of the Board of Trade. To-day he is past fourscore, but he has not slackened one whit of the regularity of his attendance at the House, or denied himself a quarter of an hour's talking in a week. He invariably has a few plain, practical, common-sense observations to make on the main questions that come before the House, and is always listened to with the profound respect that his age and experience extort. Mr. Dodson is another hon. member who never fails to obtain a respectful hearing

when he presents himself, which has been of late a matter of increasingly frequent occurrence. This respectful attention is chiefly a matter of habit, for Mr. Dodson was for the seven years ending 1872 Chairman of Committees, and was by common consent held to have borne himself admirably in that important office. But the qualities which go to make a good Chairman of Committees are not calculated to ensure success in a debater, and the rule holds good with peculiar force in Mr. Dodson's case. A cold, formal manner, a dry voice, a level flow of speech, and a painfully practical turn of mind, whilst making Mr. Dodson's intervention sometimes useful, do not endear him to his audience. Since the departure of Mr. Bouverie and Sir George Grey, Mr. Dodson has become one of the highest authorities on questions of order, and is not slow in asserting his position as occasions offer themselves. Mr. Monk is another gentleman who cultivates a cold and formal style of speech; but the member for

Gloucester has no Parliamentary reputation to support his manner, and it is consequently insupportable. He is invariably dressed like Mr. Dombey on the morning he condescended to marriage for the second time, and has, in fact, many other personal peculiarities which remind the observer of that awe-inspiring and uncomfortable personage.

Mr. Jenkins is a recent recruit to the ranks of the Talkers, and he lost no time in letting the House know that he was there. Like Mr. Trevelyan, the member for Dundee took his seat in Parliament with the reputation of having written a successful book—a very dangerous introduction for a young member, as, indeed, is the reputation of having made a noise in the outside world, in whatever form the distinction may have been gained. A nervous man can enter an empty drawing-room with perfect self-possession, and if he is certain that his entrance will be utterly disregarded he can walk into the room even when crowded without absolutely trembling.

But when one enters whose name and achievements are familiar to every person in the room, and who knows that there is a strong feeling of curiosity to see him, and a deliberate intention to watch his behaviour under novel circumstances, the ordeal is a trying one under which the strongest nerves may be forgiven if they fail. There are, of course, men who under such circumstances would bear themselves with a perfect manner; but the great majority of mankind may, viewed in this light, be broadly divided into two classes —one who would take an early opportunity of subsiding into a corner, and another who, mistaking bluster for self-possession, and inassailable self-conceit for the hard polish of good breeding, would saunter down the room with brazen front and accept the stare of curiosity as a homage paid to greatness. The author of 'Ginx's Baby' is of this latter class, and is consequently a man predestined to fail in gaining the ear of an assembly which is in all the world the most mercilessly exact critic of

manner. Mr. Jenkins obviously entered the House of Commons prepared to take it by storm, and the annals of Parliament do not record a more absolute or hopeless failure than the attempt made in the speech in which he formally presented himself as the coming Great Power. "I confess," writes Lord Chesterfield, "I cannot help forming some opinion of a man's sense and character from his dress, and I believe most people do, as well as myself. Any affectation whatsoever in dress implies in my mind a flaw in the understanding." A man who presents himself to the House of Commons at ten o'clock at night arrayed in a flaming red necktie, white waistcoat, and light trousers with a stripe down the side cannot fairly hope to be let off with the gentle censure implied in the use of the term "affectation." Odd fashions in dress abound in the House. Mr. Forster dresses like a market gardener out for a Sunday walk; Mr. Henley's face peers through a pair of gigantic shirt collars that would move to envy

the ultimate men in a crescent of negro minstrels; Colonel Taylour's clothes were obviously made for somebody else; and Sir Colman O'Loghlen delights in the possession of a perennial pair of trousers which, unstitched, would, as far as quantity of cloth goes, serve admirably as the mainsail of a schooner. These are eccentricities which excite a smile. But the big red necktie and the white waistcoat are *autre chose*, and there is too much reason to fear that they are the results, not of "a flaw in the understanding," but of constitutional vulgarity of mind.

At any rate this theory receives support from Mr. Jenkins's manner in delivering his speech on the Occupation of the Gold Coast. His atrocious taste in dress might have been condoned by modesty of mien. But the hon. member's manner was as "loud" and as aggressive as his attire. His easy way of resting his right hand in his trouser pocket, whence it occasionally emerged to indulge in a half contemptuous, half threatening gesture

for persons who had the misfortune to differ from him; his lofty contempt for the present Government; his patronising way of referring to members of the late Ministry; his iteration of "I advise the right hon. gentleman"; his repetition of the tragical declaration, "I am here to warn this House"; his perpetual "It seems to me"; his ever ready "My opinion is"; and, in brief, his sublime egotism, amused the House for a quarter of an hour. But after that signs of disgust began to manifest themselves, and Mr. Jenkins, growing increasingly insufferable, finally sat down amid a storm of disapprobation altogether unprecedented in the case of a member making his maiden speech.

There was no need to go far afield in search of the cause for the general unpopularity of Lord Elcho whilst yet his lordship was a prominent figure in the House. In Ben Jonson's play of 'The Fox' Mosca tells the duped Voltore how his master had often expressed his admiration for

> Men of your large profession that could speak
> To every cause.

The House of Commons' preference lies in the channel directly opposite to that assigned for the scheming Volpone. Its special aversion is retained for men who are ready to speak with confidence and authority on all possible occasions and on every conceivable subject. This is the secret of its objection to Sir Thomas Chambers, though, to do the Common Serjeant justice, he scarcely merits the contumely with which his rising is ever greeted. He invariably has some fresh light to throw on the subject about which he discourses, or some flaw in the argument of preceding speakers to expose, and he has a good colloquial style of speaking. But the House resents his too frequent interference and, above all, kicks against his manner of constantly and dictatorially beating his right hand against the palm of his left and revolving the while on a semi-circular range, so that the whole of his audience except the unfortunate section sitting directly behind

his back should have the benefit of his emphatic advice. Lord Elcho was infinitely more self-asserting than Sir Thomas Chambers, and as a rule was considerably less well informed on the subjects on which he undertook to instruct the House. Mr. Julian Goldsmid might aspire to the position vacated by the hon. member for Haddingtonshire if he were a lord and heir-presumptive to an earldom. But he is only a Fellow of a middle-class college, and whilst he has a good deal of the priggishness which sometimes pertains to a professor, he has none of that indefinable air of good breeding often to be found in the son of a peer.

That good breeding, in the common acceptation of the term, is, happily, not needed to recommend a speaker to the House of Commons is proved in the case of Mr. Burt, the miners' member for Morpeth. Mr. Burt has, he himself proclaims, worked as a miner in Choppington Colliery. He looks like what he is, and speaks with the most remarkable accent ever heard within the walls of the House of

Commons. But he bears himself modestly, shows a perfect command of the subject he discusses, and is short and pithy in his treatment of it. Mr. Davies, the member for Cardigan, began life as a sawyer, and when he rises to address the House of Commons his appearance suggests that he has called in from the pit to have a chat after finishing a job. He had a genuine success on the occasion of his maiden speech, in which he took the House by storm by declaring, in a comical Welsh accent, that he was a working man himself, though he now employed men by the hundred and paid fortnightly wages by thousands of pounds. He has a good deal of rough-and-ready humour, and calls a spade a spade, to the great relish of a *blazé* assembly long accustomed to hear it referred to as an agricultural implement. But he has of late shown a tendency to spoil his early success by repetition *ad nauseam* of the circumstance that he has "been a working man himself," and by too frequent interposition in debate. No one can

complain that Mr. Macdonald, the second professional "working man's candidate," is tiresome in his reminders of his earlier status. He is secretary of the Miners' Association for Scotland and president of the Miners' National Association if you please; but not a working man. Mr. Davies speaks from the back bench below the gangway. Mr. Burt is lost in the obscurity of the seats usually filled by the rank and file of Irish members. But no position less prominent than the front seat below the gangway, and no companionship less distinguished than that of Mr. Fawcett, Sir Charles Dilke, Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, and Mr. Roebuck will suit Mr. Macdonald; and as he stands fully a pace forward on the floor of the House, with right hand on hip, buff-coloured waistcoat fully displayed, and a respectable-looking slip of paper lightly held in his left hand, one might, without incurring just rebuke for the error, take him for a prosperous pastrycook or even a luxurious linendraper. His discourse, too, would foster the illu-

sion, having in it no more of the pith and marrow of Mr. Burt's simple speech than his voice has of the Northumbrian miner's deep burr, or his manner of that winningness which is born not so much from the sort of feeling that animated the rhetorical yeoman,

> Too proud to care from whence he came,

as from the unconsciously expressed conviction that after all the thing is not what the father was or what the youth may have been, but what the man is.

Lord Edmund George Petty-Fitzmaurice is a distinguised member of a modern new England party, of which Mr. George Otto Trevelyan is the remaining portion, and on the skirts of which Mr. Julian Goldsmid hangs with the hope of being some day admitted to the full rights and honours of membership. Young, bold, enthusiastic, deeply versed in everything, contemptuous of their elders, confident in themselves, they are ever ready with advice in critical moments, and if the nation would only listen to them there would

be not only no more sin or sorrow or suffering in the world, but no men in the Cabinet whose age exceeded 30 years. But England is not the Capitol that Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, Mr. G. O. Trevelyan, and Mr. Julian Goldsmid should save it. It must further be admitted to the disadvantage of "the party," that their failings as Parliamentary speakers are not confined to the sin of omission of ability to move by eloquence. There are certain sins of commission which are perhaps most strongly marked in the vulgarly insolent and self-sufficient manner of Mr. Goldsmid, but from which the other two are not free. In addition to a pert and jerky manner which he possesses in common with Mr. Trevelyan, Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice has certain special peculiarities which bar his advance to the position of first favourite of the House. When he rises to speak he takes hold of himself with the left hand by the lappet of his coat, his right hand and arm hanging down in a limp condition by his side, except when occasionally raised to

enforce an argument by a shake of the fore-finger. Throughout the full length of his discourse his body is moving from left to right and from right to left on the arc of a small circle, his feet alternately rising and falling as if the floor were hot, or he were "beating time." His voice is highly pitched, and is so sustained throughout, being delivered in a rapid sing song tone as if he were repeating a lesson with which he was chiefly concerned to get reeled off and so done with. *Pour comble de bonheur* for his audience the noble lord talks through his teeth, and has a curious way of throwing back his head and shutting his eyes, which proves a strong temptation to mischievous members to get up, leave the place silently, and surprise the orator when, having finished what he has to say, he unlocks his teeth, opens his eyes and finds the place empty. History is Lord Edmund's great forte, and to hear him discuss current events by the light of history ancient and modern is irresistibly to suggest a prize lecture by a

smart boy who has given up his days and nights to the study of "Magnall's Questions."

There are few forms in the House of Commons more familiar, or, on the whole, regarded with kindlier feeling, than that which rises from the corner seat on the fourth bench below the gangway on the Conservative side whenever the Pope or the simulacrum of his Holiness pops out from any other quarter. Mr. Newdegate is the Jeremiah of the House of Commons; and though the character is not in itself a lively one the hon. gentleman has by the charm of genuineness of character and imperturbable evenness of temper made it not only bearable but popular. The House sometimes plays tricks with Mr. Newdegate—occasionally greeting his rising with a prolonged groan, and anon, when by patience and perseverance he has succeeded in getting on his perennial motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission to look after the convents, counting him out. But a feeling of remorse, such as that which prostrated the school boys

at the establishment Charles Dickens knew of after they had successfully carried out a fresh persecution of "Old Cheeseman," comes over the House when the thing is done, and there is a hollowness in the laughter which betokens a heart ill at ease with itself. Mr. Newdegate's face and figure, when he rises to address the House, more especially on his annual field night, are eloquent of woe, and, moreover, of a woe which has been long and uncomplainingly borne and from which there is no present prospect of relief. In deep, sad, slowly uttered tones, sinking to an awful and at times inaudible whisper as he reaches the climax of some thrice-told tale of priestly perfidy or Popish plotting, Mr. Newdegate delivers himself of his lamentation and resumes his seat, to listen with stern, gruesome visage to the light talk of the thoughtless jester or the angry recriminations of men who he well knows are emissaries of the Pope returned to Parliament by priest-ridden constituencies with the special mission of thwarting him. It is the finishing

touch to the little comedy that on the other side of the House sits Mr. Whalley, primed with equal zeal for the only true religion, and equally ready to spy Popish beards under Protestant mufflers. In times gone by Mr. Whalley, moved by the consciousness of a common cause, was wont to hold out across the floor of the House the right hand of fellowship to Mr. Newdegate. But the member for North Warwickshire would

> Bear like the Turk no brother near the throne,

and haughtily rejected the advances. In fact, he once confided to the House his suspicion that Mr. Whalley was a Jesuit in disguise, since which declaration of open war the twin champions of Protestantism have, to the exquisite delight of the House, studiously avoided reference to each other, or even indication of consciousness of the other's existence. Up to the period when he became an absolute nuisance in connection with the Tichborne case Mr. Whalley was, like Mr. Newdegate, though in a less degree, gladly suffered for the sake of

his manful advocacy, for what he deemed truth's sake, of unpopular views. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson to Bozzy, when that charming personage was hinting that it did not become him in the presence of a great luminary to aspire to too much wisdom, "Sir, be as wise as you can." Mr. Whalley is as wise as he can be, and for the rest, even in a controversy in which accusations of fraudulent motive have been sown broadcast, no one who has any knowledge of the member for Peterborough has for a moment doubted the honesty of his intentions. If he had been blessed with a better balanced brain he might have made a figure in Parliament, for he is a clear, fluent speaker, and has sometimes risen to the pitch of eloquence. But he has wofully missed his mark, and to-day he stands up in Parliament grey-haired before his time, and, of late, with something of a broken-hearted look about him that partially hushes the angry cry with which his increasingly rare appearances are greeted.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IRISH MEMBER.

Ours is no quarrel that will not be ended,
Ours are not hearts to hate on to the last,
The foe still devoted, the foe still intended,
To him, and him only, our challenge we cast.
And him—even him—let him now but awake
To the love he should own for our desolate land,
And his hand we will take,
And his hand we will shake,
Though the blood of her children be fresh on that hand.

Irish Song.

EVER since, upon the consummation of the Act of Union, the Irish members took their seats in the British House of Commons, they have succeeded in occupying a prominent position which neither their numbers nor their special ability as legislators appears to justify. If search be made through the records of Parliament during

the last seventy years it will be found that more Ministerial crises have arisen upon questions affecting Ireland than upon any other five subjects put together. Further, there were times during his political career when O'Connell was the arbiter of the destinies of the Empire as far as they might be affected by some particular Bill introduced in the House of Commons, and though no one succeeding to the Parliamentary office of the Liberator has inherited his autocratic power, such arbitrement has on several subsequent occasions been vested in the Irish members. For fifty years their vote has, from time to time, been a matter of prime importance to Ministries, and if the story of the negotiations for securing it which have secretly taken place during the half century, might be written, it would add a curious, and perhaps a startling chapter, to our Parliamentary history.

In no House of Commons has the prominence of the Irish member been more marked than in that elected in the spring of 1874. The cause and the cry of Repeal were,

if not actually proscribed by law, rebellious in their tendency, and were avoided by large numbers of Irishmen who, cherishing the traditional hatred of English Government, were not ready to go the full length of demanding separation from the British Empire. In an inspired moment some one invented the phrase "Home Rule," and the power of the "patriotic party" was instantly doubled. Thousands who would protest against Repeal, could vote for Home Rule, and so gratify the national passion for being in opposition, a passion forcibly illustrated by the case of the Irish emigrant who, landing on the shores of America during the height of a Presidential election, was asked what his politics were, and replied that being strange to the country he had hardly had time to determine them, but any how he was "agin the Government." With a good wholesome cry, suggesting of itself the luxury of a reason for being "agin the Government," Ireland sent to Parliament a phalanx of fifty men, pledged to struggle for Home Rule, and bound to subordi-

nate to its interests the natural ties of politics and party. Under a Government numerically so strong as that of Mr. Disraeli the influence of this new party has not yet been fully felt, though its power was to some extent indicated by the state of the division lists in the debate on the Endowed Schools Act Amendment Bill. But as we know, the lesson having recently been taught anew, great majorities have an inherent tendency towards decay, and there will come a time when the party which Sir John Astley delicately indicated by the term "those Irish rascals" will hold an all-important position on the eve of great party divisions, and may at some momentous epoch control the destinies of the Empire.

Mr. Butt is the nominal leader of the party of which Mr. O'Shaughnessy is the Whip, and in which all the privates are commissioned officers. The hon. and learned member for Limerick re-entered Parliament with a reputation for eloquence which, to do him justice, he has never made good. One Wednesday after-

noon in the Session of 1872, there was quite a sensation in anticipation of a great speech from Mr. Butt, who was about to make his re-appearance in Parliament after an absence of seven years. The House was crowded; the galleries were filled; expectation was on tiptoe, and the final disappointment was correspondingly great. Of course it is not Mr. Butt's fault, but even his personal appearance does not satisfy the expectation of the Sassenach who has heard of his terrible doings in Ireland. Charged with a mission of weightiest import, spokesman for a down-trodden country,

> Where they're hanging men and women
> For the wearing of the Green,

Mr. Butt presents to the House of Commons the face and figure of a perennial youth accustomed to eat and drink well from his cradle days, and free from other cares save such as might arise in the playground. Cæsar's disciples in physiology would be inclined to look rather to Mr. M'Carthy Downing than to Mr. Butt as the leader of a schism against the State.

> Yond' Cassius has a lean and hungry look,
> He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.

Mr. Butt, on the contrary, is fat, sleek-headed, and looks as if he sleeps o' nights—which indeed he sometimes does in full view of the House, occasionally waking up, roused from his post-prandial nap by the trumpet tones of Mr. Synan or the softer voice of Mr. Mitchell Henry, and interposing between the sentences of his subalterns' speech a vigorous but inconsequential "Hear! hear! hear! hear!" Mr. Butt is credited with many brilliant successes when appealing to an Irish jury for prisoners at the bar. His nearest approach to an oratorical success in the House of Commons is to be found in his speech on the Home Rule debate in the Session of 1874, when he undoubtedly made the most of a hopeless case, and won the approval of the House by his tact, judgment, and moderation. But on the whole, and of course regarding him solely as a Parliamentary speaker, he does not rise above the average, and falls far short of the natural excellence of Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Richard Power, the O'Donoghue, and Mr. Plunkett.

Mr. Sullivan I hold to be, take him all in all, the most effective speaker amongst the Irish members. His words are well chosen, his sentences easily and naturally grouped, and his mind is aflame with imagination. It is easy to conceive how, speaking to a mass meeting of his countrymen, this nervous, passionate, finely strung man, whose lips have been touched by the heaven-born fire of oratory, would sway the souls of the people to the measure of "the bold anthem of Erin-go-Bragh." But the House of Commons is not a Dublin mass meeting. It is a body of practical business-like men, who laugh at Erin-go-Bragh and hold with Sydney Smith that a far better anthem would be "Erin-go bread and cheese, Erin-go cabins that keep out the rain, Erin-go pantaloons without holes in them." When Mr. Sullivan has mastered this idea, and the progress he has made in the brief term of his membership shows that he is quite capable of doing it, he will be a power in the House of Commons, and will

have the opportunity of proving himself a patriot. Mr. Power is a young man who came in with the new Parliament, but he has already made his mark upon an assembly always ready to acknowledge merit whatever constituency it may represent. With singular rapidity and success Mr. Power adapted himself to the atmosphere of the place, and on making his first speech showed himself possessed of that indescribable "House of Commons manner" which other men strive after for a generation and never acquire. Imperturbably self-possessed without being self-conceited, Mr. Power dominates the House, which gladly yields itself up to the charm of his unpretentious yet effective speech.

The O'Donoghue speaks in Parliament under a heavy weight. Once the idol of his countrymen in the south and west of Ireland, he is now their abhorrence.

> Who no longer holds a place
> In the hearts of Erin's race,
> Scattered o'er the earth's broad face?
> O'Donoghue!

> Yes: true men, the world all o'er,
> In deep sadness now deplore
> That their Motherland e'er bore
> O'Donoghue!

This, and doggrel like it, the hon. member for Tralee may hear chanted at his heels any day when he walks on Irish soil, and when he rises to address the House of Commons it is hummed in his ears by his countrymen who cluster below the gangway. The O'Donoghue's crime is that he has reversed the order of things which have gone forward in the mind of Mr. Butt. In his early days Mr. Butt was an anti-nationalist, and one of the most trenchant denouncers of O'Connell. He is now, as we know, the leader of the nationalist party, and essays to wear the mantle of the Liberator. In his early days The O'Donoghue was a fervid nationalist, and to-day he is one of the most dangerous Parliamentary opponents of Home Rule. He began where Mr. Butt left off, and finishes where Mr. Butt began. That is all; but the difference to the Irish members is immense, and

the interference of the member for Tralee in the debates on Irish matters is generally the signal for demonstrations which go nearer to pass the limits of Parliamentary usages than anything I have seen attempted. With a courage that excites the admiration of the disinterested lookers-on, The O'Donoghue nevertheless shirks no opportunity of declaring his opinions, and, appearing under the difficulties indicated, invariably bears himself with dignity. He has a fine presence, a good voice, and a composed manner, moves with natural gestures, and utters eloquence as if it were his every day language. Mr. Plunkett very rarely speaks, but he speaks so well that the House would fain hear him oftener. His unpremeditated protest against Mr. Mitchell Henry's attack in the session of 1874 upon the Irish bar was a masterpiece of fiery yet well-controlled eloquence.

Of the Talkers, pure and simple, described by Dryden,

> The herd of such
> Who think too little and who talk too much,

the ranks of the Home Rule party furnish a larger number of examples than any other section of the House. As a rule, it must be admitted that the Irish Talkers are not often dull, and in truth if they were the position of the bulk of members would be unendurable. It is a merciful dispensation of Providence, for which we are scarcely sufficiently warm in our acknowledgments, that, admitting the necessity of one province of the kingdom being in a chronic state of dissatisfaction, the seat of the sorrow has been fixed in Ireland, and that it is in the Irish accent the everlasting wail goes up through the rafters of St. Stephen's. Let us pause a moment to think how many weeks purchase the Speaker's life would be worth supposing Ireland were contented and the inevitable Home Rule party of the day came from Scotland or from Wales!

About such men as Mr. M'Carthy Downing or Mr. Mitchell Henry there is, it is true, nothing to relieve the tedium of blatant talk

or to temper the feeling of disgust with which the House hears poured forth a constant stream of reckless statements, false inferences, and childish misrepresentation of notorious facts. Mr. Mitchell Henry is absolutely without recommendation to the favourable notice of an audience—not even having been born an Irishman, and therefore lacking the overflowing humour, the chivalrous spirit, the unconscious drollery, the endearing simplicity of mind, and the charming kindliness of manner which are characteristics of one of the finest races of men that people the earth. Mr. M'Carthy Downing was born in county Kerry, but when he reached the high position, which he still gloriously holds, of chairman of the Skibbereen Town Commissioners, it would have been well for him and for a suffering House of Commons if he had recognised in the promotion the eternal fitness of things and permitted his mind to run peacefully through the level groove of the local politics of the barony. Mr. Synan, though he rarely rises to

the height of his own voice, is a well-meaning man, and is never really so angry with anything as one hearing him shout in the House of Commons might suppose him to be. Herbert Pocket, walking across Palace Yard whilst Mr. Synan was addressing the Speaker in the recesses of the House of Commons, might suspect that his father-in-law, old Bill Barley, leaving his bed, had got into Parliament and had learned to express himself in Parliamentary language. But Mr. Synan's bark is much worse than his bite, and when he is apparently in a paroxysm of passion, and is undoubtedly shouting at the top of his voice, there is a twinkle in his eye that seems to say to the Speaker "It's all right, me bhoy; don't be frightened; I only want them to hear across the Channel that I'm doing my duty as an Irish member by walking into everything and proving that whatever is isn't right."

Sir John Gray, Major O'Gorman, Mr. Biggar, Mr. Conolly, and, *par excellence*, Sir Patrick O'Brien are members for Ireland who

seem like characters that have stepped forth from the pages of Charles Lever to take their seats in the usurping Parliament. Sir John Gray rarely speaks now, but there was a time when he was foremost in the fight. Who that heard it can forget his dignified reproof to the House one evening during the passage of the Irish Land Bill? The hon. knight was making a speech against something or other when there occurred to him, by way of illustration, a story about a boy who had a grandmother. The narrative was rather of a melancholy cast, and the grandmother appearing in its recital with comical iteration the House began to laugh at the exceeding dolour of the tone in which the word was pronounced. At every fresh introduction of "the grandmother" the merriment increased, and at last Sir John, standing indignant amid the idle mirth, called out in stentorian tones, "Sir, haven't English boys grandmothers?" The laughter hereupon became boisterous; but the hon. knight had made his point, and suggested, to the confusion

of the Oppressor, one point at least upon which the Celt stood on a common footing with the Sassenach.

The O'Gorman is unique, and for his due treatment requires a chapter to himself. Butler relates of Hudibras that

> Here our authors make a doubt
> Whether he were more wise or stout.

Possibly because he is a supernaturally spacious person, this is a difficulty which would never occupy the ingenuity of commentators on the life of the hon. member for Waterford. The Major made his *début* as a Parliamentary speaker early in the Session in the course of the debate on Mr. Blennerhasset's motion for the purchase of the Irish railways. At this time the Claimant to the Tichborne Estates filled a large space in the public mind, and the discovery made upon the Major's presenting himself from a remote corner under the gallery that the House of Commons possessed a member considerably larger in bulk than the Claimant, caused a flutter of excitement to run

from bench to bench. The House was crowded for a division after a debate, which it was thought was closed, when the new member presented himself and stood silent, apparently gasping for breath. This preliminary peculiarity, now grown familiar, was at first sight startling, and when the silence was broken by a voice which in thunder tones said, "Mr. Speaker!" the contrast, and the whole scene was so comical that the House burst into a roar of laughter, which continued almost without cessation till the Major sat down, he having in the meantime succeeded in bringing up the Speaker with whom he held a brief controversy on a point of order. The next time the Major spoke was ten days later, the provocation being an endeavour made by Mr. Richard Smythe to enforce the prohibition of the sale of liquor in Ireland on the Sunday. This roused him to an unusual height of indignation, and commencing by addressing the Speaker as "Mr. Chairman," and occasionally lapsing into the use of the forbidden

term of address "Gentlemen!" he eloquently opposed the motion. "For ever let the Heaven's fall!" he fervently exclaimed, "but never let it be said that you introduced into Ireland an Act which prevented a poor man going out for a walk on a Sunday—p'raps a hot Sunday, maybe a wet Sunday—with his family, and that he could not get a drop of beer, or porter, or whisky. It's creating one law for the rich and another for the poor, and that," said the Major, sinking back into his seat, "is a thing I never *will* stand." A few weeks later the Major added to his growing renown by the delivery of his famous allegory about the nun who "had a sister whose name was Sophia," and who in some incomprehensible manner was murdered, together with her father, "who was a king," and one or two of her brothers. But whether the bloody deed had any connection with Mr. Newdegate's motion for an inspection of monastic institutions, in the debate on which the Major was speaking, no one can say.

The Major's great night, however, happened just before the close of the Session. The House was in Committee on the Expiring Laws Continuance Bill, a stage which the Irish members had stoutly opposed, objecting to the inclusion in the Bill of the Coercion Acts. In the long debate which had preceded the removal of the mace the Major had made a short speech—the head or tail of which no one could discover—and had sat down, it being understood that he had accomplished his mission. But like a tame tiger who has once tasted flesh, The O'Gorman, having experienced the delight of the cheers and laughter which he had drawn from the House, grew perfectly unmanageable, and finally ran away with the whole Irish team. Up to half-past twelve the debate had been decorous and even dull, but about that hour the Major began to grow restless, and his deep voice was occasionally heard rolling through the smoke of the debate, like field-guns fired amid the rattle of rifles. It was Mr. Butt's defection that set him off at last.

An aggravating repetition of motions to report progress led Mr. Butt to say angrily and audibly to his faithful party that if such a course were persisted in he would vote against them. And he was as good as his word. He voted in the same lobby with the Ministers, and on his return Mr. Biggar moved that the chairman do leave the chair.

Mr. Biggar is a gentleman who is chiefly distinguished by a chronic hoarseness of voice, which earlier in the evening had drawn forth a protest from the Speaker, who begged Mr. Biggar "not to talk to himself, but to address the chair." The hon. member also has a habit, when he desires to catch the Speaker's eye, of holding out his hat at arm's length, and shaking it as if he were hailing a cab. On this occasion Mr. Biggar's hat was discovered violently waving from the bench just behind that on which were the ex-Ministers, and it appeared that Mr. Biggar had got down there to be nearer the Speaker, and so insure his hearing him when he moved his motion. Mr. Butt

was sitting next to the hon. member, and as soon as he had resumed his seat the member for Limerick rose, and in hotly spoken words denounced Mr. Biggar as an enemy to the true interests of Ireland. It was now that The O'Gorman came to the fore. Whilst Mr. Butt was speaking the Major suddenly interposed with a violent burst of hissing, which un-Parliamentary sound he presently changed for shouts of "No! no!" "Oh! oh!" "Ah!" and other interruptions, all uttered in a voice the like of which for volume has never had its equal in the House of Commons.

Such general approval of Mr. Butt's sentiments was expressed that Mr. Biggar shrank from insistence upon his motion, and it would have fallen through but for The O'Gorman, who, with his hands clasped across his capacious stomach, his hat firmly pressed down over his eyes, and a preternaturally stern expression on his face, insisted on a division. "The question is," said the Speaker, "that this motion be by leave withdrawn. I think

the Ayes have it." "The Noes have it," roared the Major. "I think the Ayes have it," the Speaker mildly repeated. "The Noes have it," bellowed the Major amid roars of laughter. In vain Mr. Sullivan, Mr. M'Carthy Downing, and others went up to him and implored him to desist. At other times he is, I believe, mild as a lamb, and most exemplary in his obedience to orders; but the blood of The O'Gormans was up, and to all entreaties the Major answered with increasing fierceness, "The Noes have it." There was no help for it, and the House was cleared for the division, and presently The O'Gorman, who, as I have said, is considerably bigger than the Claimant, walked up the floor of the House side by side with his diminutive co-teller, Mr. Biggar, at the head of a division of irreconcilables full thirteen strong.

This was the commencement of a succession of divisions which carried the Committee on past three o'clock in the morning, and for all of which the Major was responsible. Just after the figures in this first division were declared,

he fell into an error which momentarily made him cautious. An amendment by one of the Home Rulers was put from the Chair in due form: "That these words be added to the Clause. Those that are of that opinion say 'Aye;' the contrary, 'No.'" There were a few "Ayes" from the Irish members, and a loud shout of "No" from the Ministerialists. The O'Gorman had not heard the question, but the cry of opposition acted upon him like the blast of a trumpet upon an old war horse, and he suddenly came in with a great roar of "No!" This unintentional opposition to his own side was greeted with a burst of laughter that lasted several moments, and which The O'Gorman noticed only by raising his hat and bowing defiantly to hon. gentlemen opposite. He was quiet for a short time after this, but he recovered his spirits, and thenceforward ruthlessly objected to everything, dividing the Committee time after time, and finally bringing matters to a state in which Mr. Butt, Mr. Sullivan, and a score of the more responsible

Home Rulers left the House. But this made no difference to The O'Gorman. He seemed to feel that a great hour had struck for Ireland, and as he panted in and out of the division lobby with a comical look of fierceness on his face, his enormous person was suffused with the consciousness of the conviction that if fate had sounded the Hour, here truly was the Man. Amid much that is held in common by the members for Ireland Major O'Gorman preserves one strong mark of individuality, which will make him notable as long as the city of Waterford spares him to Parliament.

> The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
> But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Mr. Conolly is a red-hot Protestant who sits on the Conservative benches and displays much ingenuity and good feeling in stirring up with a long pole his compatriots on the other side of the House. Sir Patrick O'Brien is always ready to rise at touch of the pole, and being of a choleric temperament, and constitutionally of a hazy mental vision, the general drift of his

remarks is so hard to follow that the House has long since given up the attempt. He is not an infrequent speaker, but his talk is such as Carlyle describes Coleridge's monologues to have been, "not flowing anywhither like a river, but spreading everywhither in inextricable currents, and regurgitations like a lake or sea; terribly deficient in definite goal or aim, nay often in logical intelligibility; *what* you were to believe or do, on any earthly or heavenly thing, obstinately refusing to appear from it. So that most times you felt logically lost; swamped near to drowning in this tide of ingenious vocables, spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world." If Sir Patrick has found time to read Lord Lytton's Fables in Song, he may recognise his prototype in the ancient fox of fable:—

> I am the ancient fox of fable.
> Few are the men I have met with able
> To understand me; and still more few
> The men that listen to those that do.

Mais qu'est que ça fait? The eye of Ireland

is upon its sons in the alien House of Parliament, and woe unto him whose name does not appear with regularity in the local journals as having, in every other debate at least, emulated in word-battle the fame of

Ginral Jackson
Who thrampled on the Saxon.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CANDIDATE FOR THE LEADERSHIP.

First must give place to last because last must have his time to come; but last gives place to nothing because there is not another to succeed.

John Bunyan.

Circumstances of a peculiar character in the political world pressed upon the people of England during the Session of 1874 the question, Who is the coming Leader of the Liberal party? Removed from power by a swift and sudden stroke, Mr. Gladstone, five years earlier the absolute arbiter (within constitutional bounds) of the destinies of the nation, retired from the Leadership not only of the House of Commons, which was compulsory, but of the Opposition, which was voluntary. This retirement, never formally announced,

and sometimes compromised by participation in formal and customary ceremonies, such as the moving of the Address in reply to the Queen's Speech on the opening of Parliament and the bestowal of the thanks of the House on troops that took part in the expedition to Ashantee, was indicated in a peculiar manner. According to Parliamentary etiquette the seat of the Leader of the Opposition is opposite the brass-bound box at the end of the clerk's table directly facing the Leader of the House. On the night when the Address was moved this place was punctiliously kept vacant for Mr. Gladstone, but on his arrival the right hon. gentleman sat down at the lower end, amongst the throng of ex-Under-Secretaries of State. Thence he rose to address the House, following Mr. Disraeli, and it is from this place that all his speeches of the Session have been delivered, including the memorable one with which he enlivened the last Wednesday afternoon of the Session. It was a significant feature in the scene in which Mr. Gladstone,

hitherto scornfully patient and contemptuously long-suffering under the persistent attacks of Sir W. Harcourt, at last turned, and with easy gesture and no apparent exercise of force crushed his presumptuous adversary, that the ex-Solicitor-General had delivered his attack standing in the place of the Leader of the Opposition.

The temporary disorganisation of the Liberal party following upon the rout at the hustings in February thus brought into prominence the question of candidature for the Leadership on that side of the House. But there are other reasons, which daily increase in cogency, why men's minds should be turned in this direction and should include in their purview the question of Leadership on both sides. Never in his Parliamentary career has either Mr. Disraeli or Mr. Gladstone exceeded himself in the vigorous ability displayed by each during the last Session; but, nevertheless, the facts remain that the one is in his sixty-ninth year and the other in

his sixty-fifth. Few unaccomplished facts are more certain than that Mr. Disraeli is now holding his last Premiership, and that with his next lease of power the final chapter of Mr. Gladstone's life as an English Prime Minister will be closed. Who is to take up the wand of power when it falls from the hands of these potent magicians?

Looking first in search of answer along the Liberal benches, we see six men whose prominence in debate suggests that amongst them is to be found the successor to Mr. Gladstone. Their names are the Marquis of Hartington, Mr. Forster, Mr. Lowe, Mr. Goschen, Mr. Childers, and last, though in the opinion of one person not least, Sir W. Harcourt. The first five have with more or less officiousness —less almost exclusively referring to the Marquis of Hartington—presented themselves to the House under circumstances which suggested to Mr. Lowther the happy description of them collectively as "the Commissioners for executing the office of Leader of the Oppo-

sition." It was curious to note early in the Session in what regular rotation Mr. Lowe, Mr. Forster, Mr. Goschen, and Mr. Childers assumed the functions of the absent Leader. Sometimes the change was effected on alternate nights; sometimes the Leadership was invested in one man for three successive nights. But the variation was inevitable, and Mr. Disraeli was doubtless sincere in his expression of satisfaction during the debate on the Scotch Church Patronage Bill when noting Mr. Gladstone's return and seeing a prospect of the end of this condition of bewildering uncertainty. The phenomenon was not, however, without its special value as affording an opportunity of observing the candidates engaged in a sort of rehearsal. It must be acknowledged that the first, and throughout the prevalent, feeling was one of despair. Mr. Gladstone is not a great or a successful party leader, falling in this respect, as has been illustrated, far short of the skill of Mr. Disraeli. But the great gulf that is fixed

between him and the most promising of the candidates for the succession of power is one to be bridged over only in the moment of direst and most absolute necessity.

Intellectually, Mr. Lowe stands on the nearest level with Mr. Gladstone, and he possesses some qualities which would recommend him for promotion to the Leadership of the House of Commons, if not to the Premiership—which, it will be well to note at the outset, are two entirely different things. He is a skilful debater, thrusts with keen and polished lance, and parries with a shield of fine workmanship held with easy yet strong grip. He would be great at "question time," and in replying on a debate the House would be treated to delightful specimens of caustic oratory in the course of which solecisms uttered on the other side would be infallibly detected and incontinently rent to shreds. But a Leader of the House of Commons cannot rule by intellect alone. He wants judgment, tact, breadth of view, command of

temper, and that constitutional quality which can be fully described only by the French word *bonhomie*. In all these qualities Mr. Lowe is deficient, and thus it comes to pass that his chances of succeeding Mr. Gladstone are rarely even discussed.

To mention Sir W. Harcourt in such an enquiry would a year earlier have appeared to be a joke. But within the few weeks preceding the end of the Session the ex-Solicitor-General formally entered himself for the race, and must be considered as in the running. It is no new or unusual thing for young men to enter Parliament with the fixed resolve to make a lasting reputation, and with the high hope of success. It is much more true that every member of Parliament has hid away in his desk the portfolio of the Premier than that every soldier carries in his knapsack the bâton of a Field-Marshal. A single successful speech may draw upon a man the attention of the House, and thereafter his future is under his own guidance. Mr. Vernon Harcourt had

carefully studied the lives of successful men in the House of Commons, was fortunate in hitting upon the safe and sure way to success, and was gifted by nature with some talent for treading it. Entering Parliament just after the heyday of the Adullamites, the mature youth whom Oxford had chosen to represent it became seized with the conviction that the cheapest and quickest way to gain personal importance in the House of Commons was to be in a chronic state of opposition—not party opposition, that is a matter of course to which every man adapts himself, but opposition to his own leaders. To sit on the Liberal benches and thwart Mr. Gladstone; to range himself on the Conservative side and criticise Mr. Disraeli, these are the two courses open to the young member ambitious of becoming a somebody in the House of Commons. Predilection for Liberalism, and the circumstance of his having been returned by the Liberal electors of Oxford, naturally directed Mr. Vernon Harcourt to what was then the Ministerial

side of the House, where he of course took his seat below the gangway.

Opportunities of making himself notable were diligently sought and industriously used. The hon. and learned member did not waste his time in hunting ground game. Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli were the twin objects of his attention, and he kept in their company and shared in their "kicking up of the dust," even though it were in something of the comparatively minor position of the fly on the chariot wheel. A commanding figure, a good voice, a sarcastic style, a happy gift of phrase-making, a fund of general reading, and a lawyer-like faculty of mastering a brief at an hour's notice combined to make him a Parliamentary speaker decidedly above the average. Somebody trying to define pleasure has said it consists chiefly in surprise. Of this also Mr. Vernon Harcourt had taken count, and till by repetition the thing palled upon the accustomed palate, the House of Commons had the "pleasure" of hearing a

professed Liberal, after having paid some compliments to his chiefs, suddenly turn upon them and in bitter words denounce their course of procedure. No one knew for certain when Mr. Vernon Harcourt rose to speak in debate which side he would espouse, a circumstance that of itself lent an interest to his interposition, and the excitement was cleverly kept up by the ostentatiously impartial manner in which the speaker alternately administered praise and blame. An able man who professes himself "independent" in the House of Commons is like one standing in the centre of a poised plank on either end of which a child sits. By the slightest motion one way or the other the centre figure can sway the ends at his pleasure; and similarly a skilful speaker in an assembly divided by a sharp party line can move it to applause which shall be continuous and in the aggregate general. Speaking, say, from the Liberal side, he begins by admissions favourable to the opposite party, which are rapturously cheered as

indicating dissension in the enemy's ranks. After a while he proceeds to show that, notwithstanding this state of things, the right hon. gentleman the member for Buckinghamshire is no better than he should be, whilst the party he leads has many gaping joints in its armour; and hereupon the Liberals cheer, less, it is true, in support of the speaker than in triumph over their momentarily crestfallen opponents. And so the plank is set in motion, now one end in high elation, now the other, whilst the figure in the centre folds its arms and muses on its own mightiness. The trick is easily detected and seems facile to learn and practise. But that it is not so may be gathered from a consideration of less adroit practitioners—Mr. C. Lewis, for example, who during the Session of 1874 essayed to follow on the Conservative side the course which has led so many Liberal politicians to the Treasury bench.

It was Mr. Vernon Harcourt's misfortune that he was, with unusual promptitude and

unanimity "found out," or at least the House thought it had "found him out," which for all practical purposes amounts to the same thing. At the period indicated, which specially includes the Session of 1873, it was understood that the object of the hon. and learned gentleman's ambition was the Solicitor-Generalship, and it was a matter of common occurrence for reference to be openly made in debate to the existence and pressure of this motive. At the close of the Session the coveted prize was within his grasp, but its possession proved almost illusory, leaving him only a knight's title to convince him that it had not been a dream. At the opening of the Session of 1874 he was Sir William Harcourt, with a seat on the front Opposition bench, and in contact with circumstances that suggested the passage of a cycle since the days when Vernon Harcourt sat below the gangway opposite and twitted "my right hon. friend at the head of the Government." Here was a collapse of a great scheme, and just when the patient

private had struggled out of the ranks, and had his place and his cocked hat to ride with the staff! What was to be done? There were two courses open to him. He might throw in his lot with his colleagues, wear their uniform, do sentry work on the front Opposition bench, go out under fire when ordered, vote with the Whip, and in due time, when the tide turned, cross over to the Treasury bench once more as Solicitor-General, with the certain prospect of the reversion of a judgeship as the reward of faithful service. Or he might fling off his allegiance to his chief, deliberately renounce his chances of promotion when Mr. Gladstone should come back to office, and, defying his old patron, play double or quits with Fortune. After some hesitation, and partly urged on by circumstances, Sir W. Harcourt has decided upon the latter course. Had Mr. Gladstone been firmly seated in his command at the opening of the Session there is little doubt that his ex-Solicitor-General would have jogged along with such equable pace as nature

has made possible to him. For some weeks he did so travel, submitting to the discipline of the ex-Ministerial bench. But the sight of the apparently open Leadership and of his colleagues struggling to make it their own proved too much for him, and after a brief period of indecision he threw aside his unaccustomed corks and struck boldly out for himself, shaping his course right up the middle of the stream. Like the sailor, whose watching and waiting 'Wife' Mr. Faed painted for this same year's Academy,

> He trimmed his sail to the baffling winds,
> And steered to the raging main;
> Ah! who can tell if the sailor bold
> May ever come back again?

Sir W. Harcourt's new departure is a noteworthy one; but like his earlier advances towards Parliamentary fame it is the result rather of study and imitation than of intuition and impulse. When he set out on his career for the Solicitor-Generalship he adopted as his own the tactics of Mr. Lowe and his com-

panions in the Cave of Adullam, and proving an adept in their management, finally succeeded in his object. Flying now at higher game, he takes another model and pursues a different course. He has been looking back to the annals of twenty-eight years ago, and finds there how Sir Robert Peel, taking on the Corn Law question the course his conscience dictated, forfeited the allegiance of his party and weakened his own position, and how Mr. Disraeli made himself the spokesman of the malcontents, saying out in bold language all the bitter things that were rankling in the heart of the "betrayed" Protectionists. Mr. Disraeli's action at this epoch proved the turning point in his Parliamentary career. Hitherto he had been rather endured than encouraged, the elder folk among the party with which he had allied himself looking with suspicion upon the young man who came down to the House with carefully prepared epigrams and not too pellucid adumbrations of a new philosophy, and who was in personal

aspect not altogether dissimilar from Maud's brother,

> That jewelled mass of millinery,
> That oiled and curled Assyrian Bull,
> Smelling of musk and of insolence.

But there was no one ready and able to say such cruel things of a great Minister tottering to his fall as he: and so it came to pass that Mr. Disraeli was accepted as the spokesman of a party, and having once gained a responsible and weighty position in the House of Commons improved his opportunities till he reached the highest eminence of English political life. It is possible that Sir W. Harcourt is unconscious of the points of resemblance between the line of conduct suddenly taken by him in the first Session of the new Parliament and that adopted by the present Prime Minister more than a quarter of a century ago. But in any case the coincidence is remarkable, and it will be interesting to watch how far history will repeat itself to the end. In the meanwhile it is reassuring to remember, that between the

delivery of the speech in which Mr. Disraeli likened Sir Robert Peel to the traitorous Turkish admiral and his promotion to the Premiership twenty-two long years elapsed.

It is not very long since that Mr. Forster seemed a promising candidate, whose only possible rival in public estimation was Mr. Cardwell. This view was, however, held most strongly by those whose acquaintance with the right hon. gentleman was confined to reading the reports of his speeches in the newspapers. To persons familiar with the manner of Mr. Forster some grave obstacles to his successful Leadership will occur. He is not a pleasing speaker, yet is very fond of talking, and on occasions when it has fallen to his lot to assume the duties of the Leadership he has entangled matters and aggravated difficulties by officious interference. Of course this is a failing of inexperience, and if duly installed in the office he might learn that great secret of from time to time judiciously saying nothing, of which Mr. Disraeli is a master. But Mr.

Forster has the radical fault of heaviness. The light, nervous, skilful hand which sometimes by a slight turn steers a stormful assembly out from under the clouds and among the rocks into the sunshine and the calm, would be found wanting in him. Like some other of the Candidates, he is lacking in that faculty of playful humour which stood Lord Palmerston in such good stead, and which, possessed in another phase, makes Mr. Disraeli a successful Leader of the House. Mr. Forster sometimes seems conscious of this failing and gallantly attempts to overcome it. But the result is not satisfactory—at least to the audience. The fun itself is not of a high class, and the ungainly motions with which on these occasions the right hon. gentleman's body curiously vibrates, taken in connection with the intermission of a series of chuckles and the violent raising of a voice at no time musical, makes the process of parturition a painful one. Mr. Forster had the good fortune to be brought into prominence as a Minister responsible for

the progress of a measure to the main principle of which every one wished well. It is distinctly foreign to the spirit and scope of these papers to discuss political bearings or positions. But it may be observed, being a notorious fact, that since the passing of the Education Act Mr. Forster has lost the enthusiastic support from the Liberal side of the House which once buoyed him up; and the remark is made merely for the purpose of adding that one result of this condition of affairs has been to make the House much more impatient of those peculiarities of personal manner which as the Sessions roll on become rather more than less marked.

Like that of Sir W. Harcourt, the candidature of Mr. Goschen and Mr. Childers is not to be seriously discussed at the present juncture. Their time may come, but it is not yet. Both right hon. gentlemen have succeeded in establishing a character as able administrators and as debaters not to be scorned in a pitched battle. But neither has shown himself gifted

with the heaven-born genius that made Pitt's accession to the Premiership in his twenty-fourth year appear a natural sequence of the occurrence of a vacancy; and neither is of sufficiently long standing to claim promotion by right of seniority or service. During the Session of 1874 Mr. Goschen startled the House by appearing, for one night only, in quite a new character. When in office, and indeed on ordinary occasions, he addresses the House in a timid, half apologetical manner, and in language which well beseems his mien. On the night when the last stage of the Licensing Bill was reached, it being apparently his turn to speak for "the party," he attacked the Government in general and the Home Secretary in particular in a lively, bitter, and sarcastic speech, which was really in very good style and would have done credit to Mr. Lowe himself. It is true that the effect was somewhat marred by the right hon. gentleman's holding his hat with one hand behind his back as he spoke, sedulously standing clear of the

table, and presenting on the whole an appearance of nervous preparation for instant flight that suggested the cherishing of a design to put on his hat and make a run for it as soon as he had said all that was on his mind. But the speech was emphatically a good one, and created in the minds of hearers not only surprise but expectation.

The Marquis of Hartington's candidature for the Leadership is certainly not of his own proposing. His lordship has never pushed himself forward, yet his name has been so frequently mentioned that the outside public have grown quite familiar with the prospect of such a phenomenon as a "Hartington Ministry." There was once, nay twice, in modern history a Melbourne Administration, and there is therefore no reason why there should not be a Hartington Ministry. On the whole the Marquis of Hartington stands higher as a politician and as a debater than did Viscount Melbourne at the time he was called upon to succeed Earl Grey at the Treasury. But the

type of man is such that it would be used for the making of Premiers only in periods of difficulty similar to that which followed on the retirement of Earl Grey in 1834. Entering Parliament in his twenty-fourth year, the eldest son of the Duke of Devonshire very soon had an opening made for him on the Treasury bench, and successively as Lord of the Admiralty, Under-Secretary for War, Secretary of State for War, Postmaster-General, and Secretary of State for Ireland, he has had a wide and varied experience of official administrative duty. Throughout his career he has never said a striking thing and never done a bold one, following steadily the beaten path of official life, doing thoroughly, intelligently, and well the thing that lay to his hand. As a speaker he barely succeeded in commanding the attention of the House when his official position made his words momentous, and out of office he has, perforce, grown accustomed to speak before a beggarly array of empty benches. He invariably takes

a common sense view of the question under discussion, but he never succeeds in making common sense attractive. He is one of those men with respect to whom it is, in the interest of a large number of our fellow creatures, a matter of regret that he should have chanced to arrogate the rare position in life of a Duke's heir, for he was sure to have earned a comfortable living had he been born in circumstances that would have thrown him entirely on his own resources. In brief, the Marquis of Hartington is a hard working, conscientious, stolid man, wearing all the polish he is capable of receiving from high education and social intercourse, but withal somewhat surly in manner, greatly impressed with the vast gulf that is fixed between a Marquis and a man to the despite of the latter, innocent of the slightest spark of humour, guiltless of gracefulness of diction, and free from the foibles of fanciful thought.

All these points appear to converge upon the conclusion that it is impossible that the

Marquis of Hartington should become Prime Minister, and the appearance is not deceptive. But if we alter the way of putting the fact, and instead of, as we do in the case of the present Government and did in respect of its predecessor, talking of Mr. Disraeli as Prime Minister or Mr. Gladstone as Premier, discuss the probability of a "Hartington Ministry," we shall see that the thing is not only probable, but—supposing the House of Commons is to be exclusively considered as the source whence Mr. Gladstone's successor in the Premiership is to be drawn—that it even recommends itself as a happy solution of the difficulty. Such a Leader as is here sketched possesses a broad bosom of respectable mediocrity upon which a dozen heads aching with jealousy and burning with ambition might peacefully repose. Mr. Forster would not consent to serve under Mr. Lowe, and Mr. Lowe would scorn to hold office under Mr. Forster. Mr. Goschen and Mr. Childers are as Damon and Pythias in friendly counsel and co-operation in naval

affairs; but if one were called to lead the House of Commons the other must perforce be passed over, and it would be difficult to convince him that the selection had been made wholly in accordance with that principle by the rigid adoption of which the world has, according to Mr. Darwin, reached its present state of perfection. The elevation of Lord Hartington to the titular Premiership would leave the ambitious youth of Mr. Gladstone's Ministry exactly as they now stand, with the exception of the removal of the figure in whose colossal shadow they have hitherto walked, like Gulliver's companions in Lilliput. The Marquis of Hartington would reign but would not govern, and the country would be blessed and fructified by the flow of the stream of the united counsel of a republic of great men.

I have hitherto considered the question of the candidate for the Leadership of the Liberal party as if the House of Commons were the sole resource of the electors. That course

has been taken in deference to the practice commonly followed in similar speculations. But it appears obvious that if the necessity for supplying a Liberal Premier were to arise to-morrow it would, putting Mr. Gladstone on one side, be met by a draft on the House of Lords. Earl Granville is perhaps not a robust politician, but he is, possibly for that reason, an admirable Leader of a party. During a period of great difficulty, and with official cares of an engrossing character on his hands, Earl Granville managed so to manipulate affairs in the House of Lords that only on the rarest occasions was the country reminded that the Government of which he was the representative there stood in a hopeless minority. Suave in manner, firm in purpose, intimate with men and things at home and abroad, schooled in diplomacy, practised in administration, popular everywhere, an able and a ready speaker, Earl Granville is a man who would unite under his Leadership all save the extremest rank of the Liberal party.

A Ministry formed under his auspices would be broad-based and strong, for his Lordship is a man without animosities and without adversaries. He could invite whom he pleased to take office with him, and it is easy to imagine the acidities of some of his possible colleagues finding solution in the imperturbable good temper and tireless geniality of the Premier.

In the 'Times' of the 13th June, 1859, there is published a short article which has the value and the authority of a state paper, and throws a flood of light on the grounds for Earl Granville's special suitability for the office of Liberal Premier when Mr. Gladstone shall have retired from the scene. Three days earlier the short-lived administration of Earl Derby had been forced to resign by a vote of want of confidence. As the Shah tersely puts it in his Diary of his visit to England, "When the Tories went out the Vhigs came in;" but at this particular juncture a difficulty arose on the question of the Premiership, the Queen standing undetermined between Lord John Russell

and Lord Palmerston, content with either if the other were away. In this dilemma Earl Granville was sent for and asked to form a Ministry. Some surprise being expressed in political circles at this selection, his Lordship freely communicated to his friends the purport of his conversation with the Queen, and finally the 'Times' was enabled to publish it in the following form:—"Her Majesty, after listening to all the objections which Lord Granville had to offer, commanded him to attempt to form an administration which should at once be strong in ability and parliamentary influence, and should at the same time comprehend within itself a full and fair representation of all the sections into which the Liberal party has notoriously been divided. Feeling, probably, that it might be urged as an objection to this course that Lord Granville, who has never yet held the office of Prime Minister, would thus be placed in a position paramount to that occupied by Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, each of whom had served

her long and faithfully in many high offices of state, and had each filled the office of First Minister of the Crown, her Majesty was pleased to observe that she had in the first instance turned her thoughts towards Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell. Her Majesty felt, however, that to make so marked a distinction as is implied in the choice of one or other of two statesmen so full of years and honours, and possessing so just a claim on the consideration of the Queen, would be a very invidious and unwelcome task. Her Majesty also observed that Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston appeared to represent different sections of the Liberal party; Lord Palmerston the more Conservative, and Lord John Russell the more popular section. Impressed with these difficulties, her Majesty cast her eyes on Lord Granville, the acknowledged Leader of the Liberal party in the House of Lords, in whom both Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston had been in the habit of placing confidence, and who might

have greater facilities for uniting the whole Liberal party under one administration than could be enjoyed by either of the sectional leaders." At the present epoch there is no Lord John Russell and no Lord Palmerston to distract Majesty with imperious and evenly balanced claims to preferment. But the reasons which in 1859 caused the Queen to turn to Earl Granville with the offer of the Premiership would, in degree, exist upon the death of Mr. Gladstone, with the added incentive of the Earl's increased weight as a statesman, and his greater personal influence amongst the party of which he is a member.

On the Liberal side the difficulty in finding a successor to Mr. Gladstone would be not in respect of his position as Premier, but in that of his office as Leader of the House of Commons. To state the truth briefly there is no one on the front Opposition bench who has given any comforting signs of capacity worthily to succeed Mr. Gladstone in this department. Had Mr. Cardwell remained in the

Lower House the difficulty would have disappeared, and with him as Leader there, and Earl Granville as Premier directing the course of business "in another place," the foundations of a strong Ministry would already have been laid. But Mr. Cardwell is otherwise disposed of, and come when the necessity may, the new Leader of the Liberals in the House of Commons will probably have to be chosen from among the half-dozen men whose names have been mentioned. This being so, it seems natural that, from his political weight, Mr. Forster should be selected. But it is not impossible that personal considerations already hinted at would interfere with the success of the proposal, and in that event the Leader of the House of Commons will be the Marquis of Hartington—on the whole the best choice that poverty-stricken circumstances will permit.

On the Conservative side the question of a successor to the Leadership of the party lies in much narrower compass. Here, as with the Liberals, there is only one possible succes-

sor to the Premiership, and here again, that successor being a peer, there arises the necessity for the nomination of a Leader of the House of Commons. The position Lord Derby holds in the State affords an instance, extremely rare, of an English politician whose reputation has been made by panegyrics in newspapers and in the absence of any foundation adequate to the superstructure. A long time ago, whilst the earl was still Lord Stanley, he made a speech somewhere which some leading newspaper eulogised as containing "a common-sense view of the question." On a subsequent occasion his Lordship delivered another address on a different subject at a new place, and three newspapers simultaneously published leading articles, in which it was remarked that "Lord Stanley had taken a common-sense view of the question." Since that period the ball thus set rolling has gathered impetus and bulk, till to-day the morning after the delivery of any speech by the Earl of Derby is certain to be journalistically marked with a score of white

chalks pointing out that here at last we have "the common-sense view of the question." To say that the earth is round when it is open to a man to allege that it is flat is obviously to take a common-sense view of the question. But there is nothing very new or helpful in the assertion, and much of Lord Derby's public utterance is not beyond the charge of being akin to this sort of "common sense." It will be remembered what an ecstasy of delight we were all thrown into only a few months ago when his Lordship, addressing a Young Men's Association in Lancashire, told the enthralled audience to read good books, to be industrious, to be moral, and to take care of their health. Here truly was "the common-sense view of the question" of life, and though upon analysis we seem to have heard or read it all before, we are none the less conscious of the Earl of Derby's claim upon our admiration, or less profuse in our applause of his sterling qualities. It may be that Lord Derby is a plain

sort of a man, of phlegmatical temperament, gifted with a full average measure of intelligence, which he has cultivated with much industry, and which he applies to the passing events of the day with fairly successful issues. Perhaps the truth about him may be found in the remark Lord Althorpe was wont to make with respect to himself—"Nature intended me to be a grazier, but men insist upon making me a statesman." However this be, the Earl of Derby is the predestined successor of his strangely mated friend and colleague in the titular Leadership of any future Conservative Ministry.

In the House of Commons the choice of Leadership of the Conservative ranks lies between two men, Mr. Gathorne Hardy and Sir Stafford Northcote. Either would acquit himself well by comparison with possible Leaders on the other side. There is a wonderfully wise and statesmanlike air about Sir Stafford Northcote as he sits, spectacled and bearded, on the Treasury bench, which of

itself would go a long way towards acquiring the confidence and the submission of the House. But the right hon. baronet is not dependent on his personal aspect alone for his claim to supremacy. He is not a good speaker but he is a ready one, sees a long way through a question, and can, if need be, cleverly fence with it. He has a good deal of tact, is fair-minded, honourable, frank, and at very long intervals displays little flashes of humorous perception which are as precious as solitary stars twinkling in an apparently hopelessly murky sky. He is always listened to with that respect the House of Commons intuitively feels and liberally awards to any man who has succeeded in convincing it that he is an honest and a clear thinker, and thus he personally enjoys the confidence of both sides of the House. Mr. Gathorne Hardy is, however, the surer of the reversion of Mr. Disraeli's second office, because he alone of all the candidates has a following. To the country gentlemen the Secretary of State for

War is, except perhaps in his views on the Regulation of Public Worship, as nearly as possible the model of what a Conservative Leader should be. Mr. Disraeli, it is true, somehow or other pilots them into harbour when the sea is rough, and into the fair anchorage of power when winds and waves are propitious. But they cannot understand how he does it and are vaguely suspicious that, however it be, it is not likely to have been accomplished on really sound Conservative principles. With Mr. Gathorne Hardy the case is different. His mind is not so far above the level of that of the hereditary Conservative that its method of working may not be grasped by him and its processes of procedure understood. Mentally he is so far above the rank and file that the principle of Leadership may be introduced, and yet not so far that the idea of companionship and intelligent mutual assistance is altogether eliminated from the compact. Mr. Gathorne Hardy would make a most acceptable Leader

to the large majority of Conservative members of the House of Commons, and, *faute de mieux*, he would be fairly popular on the other side. But here, as in the change prognosticated when Mr. Gladstone's final retirement makes room for a successor, the House of Commons will suffer a grievous loss, genius giving place to clever mediocrity and facile officialism.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SILENT MEMBER.

Whilst the babbling verse
Of the vain poet frets its restless way,
In stately strength the sage's mind flows on
Making no noise.

Barry Cornwall.

In the closing sentences of his speech on the second reading of the first Reform Bill, introduced to the House of Commons by Lord John Russell in 1831, Sir Robert Peel impressively warned the House to "take care that it did not signalise its own destruction by bearing down the pillars of the edifice of its liberty, which, with all its imperfections, still contained the noblest society of freemen known to the habitable world." This high encomium, true in the day when it was

spoken, albeit the noble owner of Gatton (with its constituency of five) and the right hon. proprietor of Wareham (with its score of voters) were represented in the Commons House of Parliament, is infinitely more true at the present time. Regarded from any point of view the House of Commons has not its equal anywhere as a legislative assembly. Its composition is the most harmoniously diverse, its sense of honour is the highest, its perception of humour is the keenest, its business capacity is the largest, its collective wisdom approaches the nearest to perfection, its purity is the most stainless, its appreciation of native talent is the quickest and most generous, and its instinct is the truest of any of its compeers throughout the kingdoms of the earth. It is the one British Institution which no Britain need fear to vaunt, because foreigners are foremost in their praise of it and are united in their attempts at imitation. Next to being the Lord Mayor himself, to be a member of Parliament is, as Mr. Mundella can testify,

the surest passport to distinction for mediocrity travelling on the Continent, and the simple letters "M.P." on the bearer's card, even though the bearer be Mr. Mitchell Henry, are an open sesame to all the choicest treasure-houses that lie between the Ural Mountains and the Bay of Biscay.

This is a high tribute paid to the House of Commons, but it does not weigh one drachma beyond the just due. The British House of Commons is, then, incomparable. Who makes it so? It is not the Orator, for, as we have seen, the House counts but two in all its ranks. It can scarcely be the Official Member, for his part is but to rough hew the ends which the House itself shapes. The Independent Member, though one of the peculiar institutions of the assembly, is not strong enough or sufficiently united to account for the phenomenon. It is not the Talker, for he is a weed indigenous to all legislative assemblies, be they called Scaccarium, Congress, Corps Législatif, National Assembly, Cortes,

Reichsrath, or what not. There remains only the Silent Member, and we are forced to the conclusion that it must be he. Regarded numerically there is reason for this conclusion, for of the 653 members who sit in the present House of Commons, the number who actually carry on the debates, and whose names appear from day to day in the newspaper reports, do not exceed one hundred. But of the remaining 553 is it to be said that they have no influence in forming the character of the House of Commons, and, quite apart from voting power, in guiding the destinies of the empire? I do not suppose that any responsible person would adopt that view, and some, travelling directly in the opposite direction, might well be inclined to glorify the inarticulate multitude that sit night after night on the green benches, performing the great work of making a House, cheering their own champions, and calling "'vide! 'vide!" when distasteful persons from the other side "catch the Speaker's eye." It has been estimated by

a high authority that speech is silver but silence is golden, and if we can think of what the House of Commons would be without the Silent Member we shall be fain to admit that the aphorism is not exaggerated. What a difference there would be in the speech of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Disraeli supposing the Silent Member were rooted out of the House, and there remained only the Talking Member, ambitious, restless, eager to be on his legs and fill the chamber with the sound of a voice dearer to his own ears than that of Demosthenes would have been had the great orator lived in the present day and represented North Shropshire! We owe much to the Silent Member, even from this point of view. Archimedes was never able to carry out his cherished design of moving the world out of its orbit, because, though he was prepared to construct a lever big enough, he could never find a fulcrum on which to rest it. The Silent Member is the fulcrum by which the orators of the House of Commons move

the world, and he claims consideration accordingly.

Moreover it is no proof because the Silent Member makes no speeches that therefore he is not eloquent. Hudibras is not the only distinguished personage who

> although he had much wit
> Was very shy of using it.

"*Quand on le sait faire parler il est admirable*," wrote Madame de Staël of Goethe after having visited him at Weimar. And possibly it is the same with the Silent Member. If we only knew how to make him talk he would excel those who, like the great Talker of the Parliament that with hopeless desperation kicked against the pricks of the Reform Bill, contemptuously twit them with their taciturnity. "Does the hon. member," said Sir Charles Wetherell, making his "dying speech" for the borough of Boroughbridge which had a prominent place in Lord John Russell's *index expurgatorius*, "who cries

'Hear, hear' and 'Question,' and says nothing else, never affording others the opportunity of reciprocating the same cries—does the hon. gentleman behind the chair suppose," etc. I dare say the honourable member referred to shrank further back behind the Speaker's chair, and it is certain that the boisterous baronet enjoyed a momentary triumph. But had not natural modesty prevailed, "the hon. gentleman behind the chair" might have accepted the implied challenge to controversy and been able to show that if, truly, he did not talk much he, like the sailor's parrot, thought the more, and was a prime mover in a great assembly. At least, he might hear with equanimity the reproaches of the hon. baronet who said a great deal, and whom Mr. Greville has in a few lines sketched for us in his Memoirs. "The anti-Catholic papers and men lavish the most extravagant encomiums on Wetherell's speech," writes Mr. Greville, "and call it 'the finest oration ever delivered in the House of Commons,' 'the best since

the second Philippic.' He was drunk, they say. The Speaker said 'the only lucid interval he had was that between his waistcoat and his breeches.' When he speaks he unbuttons his braces, and in his vehement action his breeches fall down and his waistcoat runs up, so that there is a great interregnum." A charming glimpse this of Men and Manner in the Parliament to which Lord John Russell introduced his Reform Bill.

There is no phrase in more common use in Parliament than "the House." "The House will remember," "if the House thinks proper," "the House will now adjourn," the House will do this and the House will do that—*toujours* the House. What is "The House?" The House is, I venture to affirm, the estimable gentleman who comes down to Palace Yard with unvarying regularity, generally in the family carriage, and not unfrequently accompanied by female members of his family of whose agreement with the main argument of this chapter I am at least assured.

He is either the scion of some ennobled race or a successful tradesman or merchant. Regarding the House of Commons in the conventional light of an assembly of the select of a great people, the Silent Member in moments of frankness sometimes poses himself with the historical question which troubled the great King George III. when he discovered the apple in the centre of the dumpling. "How did he get there?" The question is one which, to answer fully, would demand a review of the state of English society not to be compassed within the limits of a single volume. Sufficient that he is there, and satisfactory that he does his duty manfully and with a stoical disregard of the mental toil and personal inconvenience entailed upon him. Parliamentary honour has its duties as well as its privileges, and the Silent Member is not the man to shirk them. The Whip finds no more reliable correspondent than he. He will leave the most charming after-dinner society to hurry down to the House and vote with his

party on a great division. On small questions of committee he is equally useful. From the smoke-room, from the tea-room, from the dining-hall, from the library, from the pleasant terrace facing the river where he can sit on summer evenings and watch the stately coal barges go up to their haven at Fulham Creek, the Silent Member comes trooping at the sound of the division bell, and blocks up the bar, waiting for the signal—"Ayes to the right, noes to the left. Tellers for the ayes, Mr. Black and Mr. Yellow; tellers for the noes, Mr. White and Mr. Blue." What is the question upon which the Committee are going to divide? Perhaps some intricate matter of detail in a Land Transfer Bill, of the bearings of which the Silent Member, fresh from the terrace or the tea-room, knows no more than the bargee he has been watching through the blue whiffs of smoke that languidly rose from his cigar; possibly on an abstruse question of procedure under a Judicature Act, the ramifications of which are to be

mastered by the non-professional mind only at an expenditure of much thought. Happily for the Silent Member he is not called upon to form an opinion on the subject, or even to know what the division is about. His duty is to follow Black and Yellow or White and Blue into the lobby, record his vote, and go back to the terrace to finish his cigar and wait till the tintinabulation of the division bell once more calls him to arise and save the State.

Nearer midnight the Silent Member often becomes enthusiastic, and sometimes even vocal, though, as in Sir Charles Wetherell's day, his vocabulary of speech is limited, and "Hear" and "Question," with an exceptional burst of cock-crowing, occasional cries of "Order," and one final roar of "Divide!" comprehend its full volume. Those crises of political history when it is necessary to arrest at a certain hour of the night the further progress of a party measure, or to hasten on a division after the leaders have delivered their souls, are the Waterloo of the Silent Member.

He has turned up religiously precise at prayers, and has secured a comfortable and commanding seat. He has stayed through the question time and the opening of the debate, just as the *flaneur* of the boulevards sips his glass of absinthe before going to dinner. Then he dines leisurely, leaving the House of Commons from seven to nine an abandoned place, on the desert air of which the Talker wastes his eloquence. At nine the Silent Member returns with a toothpick and in a condition of good humour with himself and all the world. About half-past nine the higher class of Talkers who can keep an audience together begin to show themselves, and the debate grows exciting. In the days before Achilles sulked in his tent, when he was at the head of an ever-victorious phalanx, Mr. Disraeli was wont to rise from the Front Opposition Bench about eleven o'clock, and for the hour or so over which his harangue extended there was much pleasurable excitement for the Silent Member, culminating when Mr.

Gladstone sprang up impulsively and, breathing fire and flashing brand, set himself to the task of repelling assault and advancing to certain victory. It seemed a special providence that the rival leaders of party should be men of such diametrically opposed temperament, and that a feast so spiced with variety should be provided for the delectation of the connoisseur. An artificial, highly-polished, keenly-sharpened, epigrammatic, terse, unemotional style that of Mr. Disraeli; and then to be followed by Mr. Gladstone, trembling through every fibre with the quick hot rush of passion, glowing and copious in language, luxuriant in fancy, fervid in conviction, and often beside himself with righteous rage—surely this was a dainty dish to set before the Silent Member, better than theatre, opera, waltz, or whist. Finally arrives the moment when he, always a latent power in the House, demonstrates his supremity. Some obstinate Talker who has carefully prepared his speech and has found no previous opening for its delivery,

presents himself, and gets as far as "Sir." Perhaps it is Mr. Goldney; it is not unlikely to be Mr. Whitwell; and it may be Mr. Wheelhouse. Thereupon arises a roar such as is elsewhere heard only in the French National Assembly when M. Gambetta delicately distinguishes as "*misérables*" persons who happen to differ from him upon particular processes of usurping supreme and personal government over the people of France. This is the Silent Member become vocal, and as his stock of voice power is unimpaired by lavish use, it is in vain that the stubborn Talker attempts to make headway against the angry torrent. The Talker is but one, and the Silent Member counts by the score; and in the end he sits down hoarse and heartbroken, for not a word he has uttered has reached the Press Gallery, and the world is bereaved of his counsel.

On occasions when the object in view is temporarily to stay the progress of a measure or to obtain the adjournment of a debate, the

Silent Member rises to still greater heights of heroism, and shows that when need be he can do more than shout "Divide!" Incidental reference has been made in preceding chapters to alternate motions that "the House do now adjourn," and that "this debate be adjourned." It may be useful to explain that, according to the forms of the House, an hon. member may at any stage of a debate move its adjournment, discussion may thereupon take place, and if the motion be opposed a division will be called. The division accomplished and the figures announced another hon. member may straightway get up and move the adjournment of the House: whereupon will follow a second division, to be succeeded by others on alternate motions for the adjournment of the debate and the adjournment of the House, the only limit to the number being the strength of the minority and the obstinacy of the majority. During the debates on the Reform Bill of 1831, the tactics of the Opposition being to delay the measure, the House divided seven times on

the alternate motions, there being debates on each, and the battle, commencing at midnight, closed at half-past seven on the following morning with a victory for the minority. In the Session of 1869 a struggle only less desperate arose in connection with Mr. Newdegate's motion for an inquiry into monastic institutions, the House adjourning at five o'clock in the morning, the sun of a summer's day having for nearly two hours been shining through the casemates on the brave but pallid and heavy-eyed representatives of a people who, as Napoleon I. petulantly said, never know when they are beaten. The hero of these fights, as of many others, was the Silent Member, who stubbornly remained at his post and "saw the thing out" whilst the more brilliant Orator and the busy Talker were lapped in slumber.

This is, however, only one phase, and that obviously not the highest, of the character of the Silent Member. Some of the best known, most highly valued, and most useful members

of the House never make a speech and rarely even throw in an observation in debate. But their influence is nevertheless felt, for others speak the thoughts of which they can make communication freely enough in private conversation, though tongue-tied in the presence of an assembly met together for the distinct purpose of debate. These men are able advisers in the task of drawing up a Bill, or in the work of Select Committees. After a late sitting of the House they are to be found at noon in the committee room upstairs, hearing and weighing evidence, and preparing reports upon which great Acts of Parliament shall be passed. At half-past four o'clock they are once more in their places in the House ready and watchful in the service of their country.

It is a great thing for a nation that a body of men such as that which sits in St. Stephen's should be found willing to devote itself, for the most part without money payment, to the guidance of the affairs of the Empire. When

the colourless glass of the unprejudiced observer is levelled at individuals there is, as we have seen, much imperfection of various kinds. But take it for all in all the House of Commons is what Mr. Gladstone in tones of generous pride called it when addressing it on the Public Worship Regulation Bill, "the greatest deliberative assembly in the world." If we analyse the sources of this greatness we shall, I venture to believe, find a chief one in its abundant store of human nature. Dryden's lines describe at once its power and its charm of absorbing and ever fresh interest. It is an assemblage of a character

> so various that it seems to be
> Not one but all mankind's epitome.

If a personal criticism which, if sometimes apparently harsh and possibly often faulty has always been honest in intention, has had the effect of throwing into high relief some evidences of dullness, verbosity, and vanity, it must be remembered that the House of Commons is a representative assembly not of

gods but of men, and that men are sometimes vain, verbose, and dull. And is it not something to be proud of that not a breath can be whispered against the personal honour of Members, and that those amongst us freest from taint of sycophancy, and constitutionally incapable of reverence for any particular groupings of the alphabet regarded as mere groupings, take off their hats and salute the House of Commons as the highest model of the true gentleman anywhere to be found? The House of Commons is, like all other human assemblies, built of clay. But the closer our study of its Men, and the more intimate our acquaintance with its Manner, the readier is our acknowledgment that the particular kind used in its construction is

The porcelain clay of human kind.

THE END.

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